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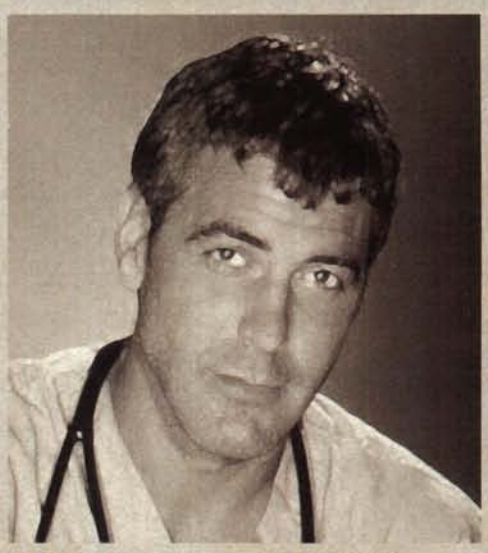

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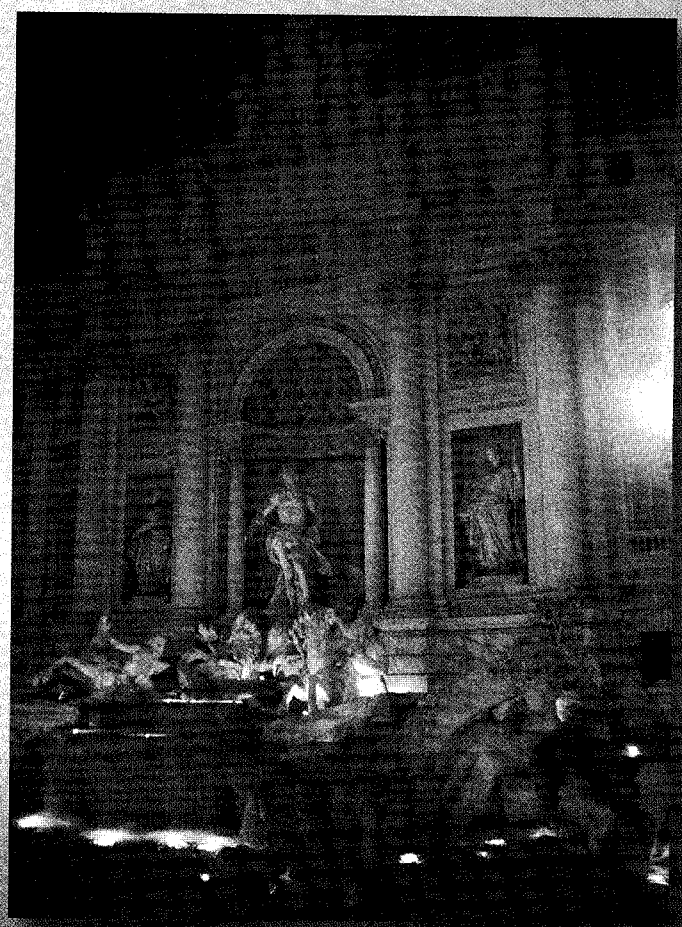

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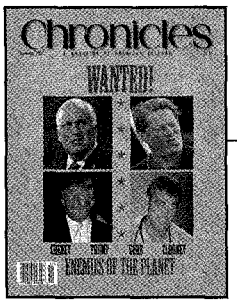

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POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On Dangerous Travels

Harry Nicolaides, in "Letter From Saudi Arabia: The Year of Teaching Dangerously" (Correspondence, September), recounted an experience that an acquaintance found to be farfetched. Although I have never lived in Saudi Arabia, I experienced almost every element of Mr. Nicolaides' story while living in France and Germany.

While studying and working in France in 1997, it was not uncommon to run across Algerians, in the Muslim parts of Paris, peddling bootleg pornography. And although they considered all French women to be whores, it certainly did not stop them from hounding French women in bars. Like a pack of wolves fresh on the scent, they would work in groups, catcalling and groping often defenseless females sitting alone.

The real award, though, goes to the Azerbaijanis and Egyptians who were studying at the same Goethe-Institut as I in Dresden. Many of the stories (and I've recounted them frequently over a gin and tonic to friends) seem straight out of *Borat*. One Azerbaijani told me that a doctor recently had proved the Azerbaijani penis to be the most virile in the world. And, while reveling in such national treasures, they would often become very "touchy" with me and the other Westerners there (mostly Swedish attorneys). They were not "gay," however, because, when I brought up the topic of homosexuality, one of them spit on the floor and said that all homosexuals should be lined up and shot.

One of the most insightful events was when an Egyptian student let me look into his lockbox, which contained pornographic magazines and an assortment of books on Hitler. The admiration of Hitler, however, did not extend beyond a mere the-enemy-of-my-enemy-is-my-friend dynamic. In class once, when European ethnic nationalism was discussed, the Muslims furiously dissented, siding with the multicultural left. One doesn't want to bite the hand that feeds, especially when that hand is providing free materials and labor for Trojan horses all over Europe.

—Matthew A. Roberts
Kansas City, MO

On People Who Count

The cynical tone of Thomas Fleming's disparagement of "modern" education and its theories from the point of view of the classicist ("Counting People, and People Who Count," *Perspective*, September) is entertaining reading with a moral of sorts to boot. He describes the generally bad lot of contemporary educational theory and practice and posits the saving graces of the thousands of years that perfected traditional learning modes and curricula often referred to as classical. Only the latter, he argues, may produce "people who count," and whose presence is essential to a civilized society. We may conclude that, given modern education as it is, not many such people may be expected to emerge, and so decadence must ensue. Are we so different really? Think of Alcibiades as the paradigm of education gone wrong. More, the Sophists were deemed as morally disreputable and money-hungry as the faddist gurus of modern education.

I would argue that the "people who count" are rare birds indeed, and always have been. Yet there is a need for them no less than there is a need for plumbers and shoemakers. Fortunately, even in our day, these rarities discover themselves, usually through some inner need for enlightenment that is unfathomable to their more pedestrian fellows. Some have the good fortune to come across a mentor capable of smoothing their growth into principled civility of thought and action. Some slog through on their own, to emerge blinking upon the realization that they are not alone as they discover and share some community of scholars or statesmen who speak of Troy on familiar terms.

The beauty of the piece is that it exposes education as not a matter of indoctrination or training, or even of the ethereal goal of learning for learning's sake, but as intending the generation of "a good man who can be useful to his neighbors and to his community."

For that matter, so is a plumber.

—Bill Bonville
Hugo, OR

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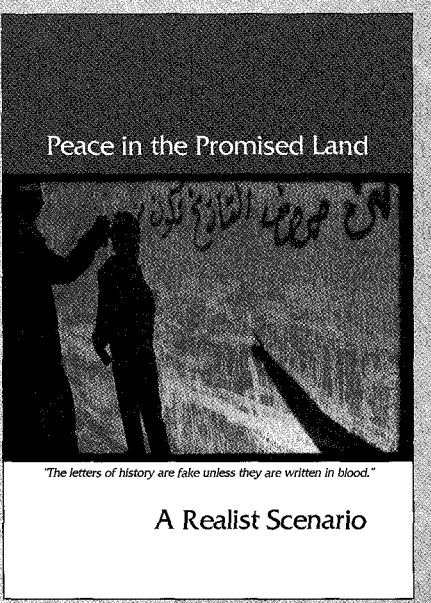

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by Justin Raimondo

Petraeus and the Senate Chickens

The central character in the little morality play spun out by the Bush administration in making the case for "staying the course" in Iraq is Gen. David Petraeus, commander of our forces in Iraq and the savior of the neocons' war. His much-vaunted report was to elucidate the conditions for "victory" once and for all, and silence the "defeatists" and other cowards who dared question our sainted Commander in Chief. Of course, a draft-dodging lush who couldn't even bring himself to show up for duty with the National Guard is hardly a model of military virtue, and his own strategic acumen is somewhat doubtful, at best. After all, he and his political advisors have brought the Republican Party down to such a low ebb of support that it threatens to become a strictly regional phenomenon, limited to the reddest counties of the reddest states. In short, our President is hardly a figure with the sort of military gravitas to inspire confidence, and so a substitute had to be found. Certainly, General Petraeus fit the bill: Here, after all, is a seasoned veteran, his chest festooned with medals, his visage stern and calm—a veritable paragon of martial glamour. Who are we to question him? We must take his word for it when he says that victory is nigh.

The controversy surrounding his appearance, and especially the Senate vote condemning the *MoveOn.org* ad in the *New York Times*, was yet another occasion on which to wonder at the prescience of Garet Garrett, that prophet of a dark vision of empire who foresaw our present predicament, as if in a dream, more than half a century ago, and not only in general but in all its particulars. In a pamphlet that went largely unnoticed until our own day, the doughty old lion of the Old Right laid down the "signs of empire": the ascendancy of the executive, the subordination of domestic affairs to foreign policy, the creation of a system of satellites in the name of "collective security," "an emotional complex of vaunting and fear"—and, most relevant here, the "ascendancy of the military mind, to such a point at last that the civilian mind is intimidated."

It's almost as if Garrett's ghost hovered in the Senate chambers, laughing darkly, and bitterly remonstrating with the assembled solons as they deferred to Petraeus, abdicated their own views and their responsibility to the nation, and condemned those who dared question his report. Of course, the *MoveOn.org* ad was disrespectful; yet a general is not a priest—unless you worship Mars, the war god, as many of our neoconservative policymakers do, and as the neoconized GOP surely does. In that case, to criticize Petraeus is a kind of blasphemy.

Behind his message of qualified hope—hold and fight, the battle can be won if only we're patient and don't lose heart—was another implied message: the promise of yet another war. This was intertwined with his explanation of why we had yet to win, and who or what is holding us back from our goal: Iran. On the home front, the Republicans hold the "defeatist" Democrats and their allies responsible for their failure in Iraq, while, in the field, the blame is laid at the Iranians' doorstep.

We, it seems, are blameless. Tehran, we are told, is killing American soldiers in Iraq—although not a single of these murderous perpetrators has been captured. The Iranians are arming the militias—the very ones that we empowered when we overthrew Saddam Hussein and pulverized the Ba'athist regime—although the proof of this is very tenuous. And then there's the question of all those U.S.-bought-and-paid-for weapons General Petraeus lost track of once they were shipped to Iraq—where they mysteriously wound up on the black market and found their way into the hands of various insurgent groups, militias, and criminal gangs.

But, of course, no one brought any of that up, at least not on the floor of the U.S. Senate: Instead, the wise men and women sat there, in wonder, as their savior took all the responsibility that should have been theirs and theirs alone. All is well, he assured them—or as well as can be expected in these dark days, and, at any rate, you can always say you didn't know, that you took my word for it and the President's word, and that you aren't to blame. You can wash your hands, like Pontius Pilate, and be done with the whole affair. And so they did—voting a few weeks later for yet more funding for a war hardly any of them believed in anymore, if they ever had.

The U.S. Senate is quite content to bow before the ascendancy of the military mind-set and is glad to be intimidated; otherwise they would have to take a stand, and a firm one, and that is something they are not used to doing unless it means defending their own power and prerogatives. If someone should suggest that they give up their pensions, or their free haircuts, or any of the other perks they enjoy at our expense—well, then, surely no other considerations, either of decorum or political feasibility, would stand in the way of their wrath and its fulsome expression. Yet, in this case, when the fate of the nation—and a rather large portion of the world—lies in their hands, they are more than willing to wave the white flag of surrender. And when someone does rise to challenge Petraeus, they unite, for once, and turn on the blasphemer. It is a sign not only of empire but of decadence, of our final descent into militarism and sycophancy of a particularly unattractive sort.

The irony here is that Petraeus's own boss, Adm. William Fallon, chief of Central Command, openly disdained Petraeus as "an ass-kissing little chicken-sh-t" at their first meeting in Baghdad last March, according to Jim Lobe of Interpress News Service. "I hate people like that," the admiral added, after Petraeus started off the meeting on a note that Fallon interpreted as ingratiating.

So it has come to this: In the age of empire, only men in uniform dare to speak their mind, while the rest of us stand silently by, as we head into the abyss of perpetual war. Petraeus, we are told, has political ambitions: He once told an Iraqi official that he hoped to run for president some day. Let us hope that, by that time, civilians will have regained their voices—or else we'll have to draft Admiral Fallon to run against him.

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THE RACE MAFIA GOES TO JENA

If Jesse Jackson or Al Sharpton believed raising Cain in Jena, Louisiana, would rekindle that old-time religion, they were sadly and predictably wrong. They hoped to reprise the glory days of Selma and Montgomery, but the media and most Americans forgot their vaunted march as quickly as its slogans wafted into the Bayou State's muggy miasma. It doesn't help the cause, after all, when your movement bases its grievance on six black thugs who stomped and kicked a white boy because he was, well, white.

This, however, is the Race Mafia's brand of "racial tolerance." Black gang smashes white boy: Protest the arrest. White boys don't rape black girl: Learn about racism. Either way, the game is rigged: Heads, blacks win; tails, whites lose.

They lost in Jena, where the beating of Justin Barker at Jena High School on December 4, 2006, joined the growing list of flagitious black-on-white crimes of late, which included the shooting of Emily Elizabeth Braddock in Moore County, North Carolina, and the mauling of a 13-year-old white boy in Virginia Beach—both in September. A few years back, Kansans were treated to the Wichita Massacre. A few months ago, it was the vicious carjacking and murder of a white couple in Knoxville, Tennessee. But the unique feature in Jena is that no one disputes that a lad named Mychal Bell, along with six other boys, beat the custard out of Barker.

The Race Mafia showed up in Jena because the "Jena Six," as they are now known, were unjustly prosecuted; *i.e.*, authorities created a climate of racial intolerance by refusing adequately to punish racial incidents provoked by whites. This, of course, is another of the excuses that explains black-on-white crime. The shorthand is "black rage." If whites had provoked the attack in Jena and gone unpunished, Jackson and Sharpton might have had a point. As usual, however, the case is what it is.

To its credit, the Associated Press uncovered some unpleasant facts about the incident, undoubtedly helped by the *Jena Times*, the town weekly, and the *Town Talk of Alexandria*, the area daily. But the national media's whopper, apparently swallowed whole by the 20,000 marchers who descended upon the benighted town, follows the typical script for a racial wilding, which goes as follows: At a school assembly in August 2006, a black student asked whether blacks could sit under the "white tree," so named, supposedly, because only white students congregated under its arboreal splendor. The next day, three nooses were hung from the tree, and school authorities collared the guilty students and suspended them for three days.

On November 30, an arsonist torched the high school, and two racial fights involving Jena Six defendants occurred on December 1 and 2. On December 4, Mychal Bell, a football star, and five other boys tussled with Barker in what *Washington Post* columnist Colbert King called a "schoolyard fight." Bell is an excellent student with no criminal past, we are to believe. Witnesses said Barker taunted a member of the Six at lunch, even using the dreaded N-word. That, and all the recent white "intolerance" and "injustice" in Jena, sent Barker over the edge. He snapped. Authorities wrongly charged the Jena Six with conspiracy to commit second-degree murder and attempted second-degree murder. Later, the charges against some of the defendants were reduced, but an "all-white jury" convicted Bell of aggravated second-degree battery in July. A judge overturned that decision because Bell, he concluded, was wrongly tried as an adult. Bell was freed in late September on $45,000 bond and awaits trial in juvenile court. Other cases are pending.

When Al and Jesse showed up, the story went national and the "Jena Six" was born. The courageous David Bowie donated $10,000 to their cause, and black congresspersons took up the case. Curiously, no one, including the dirty half-dozen's supporters, claims they are innocent. For them, the issue is "equal justice." The white kids who hung the nooses, and others involved in the racial fights, did not suffer appropriate penalties. The prosecutor's charges against the Six were unjust.

Problem is, the only accurate part of this account is that Bell and his gang put a beat down on Barker, and the Six now await their fate. The real story, which the AP, *Jena Times*, and *Town Talk* reported, is as follows: When the black student at the assembly asked whether blacks could sit under the white tree, all the students knew it was a lighthearted joke, and all the students, white and black, laughed. The so-called white tree was not an exclusive preserve of whites; only two nooses, not three, hung from its leafy canopy; and, in any event, school officials removed them early in the morning. Most of the students didn't know about the nooses until a published report appeared. The federal prosecutor for the area concluded that the students who hung the nooses did not do so for racial reasons, but they landed in a different school for a month, then received a two-week, in-school suspension.

As for the racial fights following the fire, one occurred after a group of black students, at least one of whom became a Jena Six defendant, tried to crash a private party. The other "fight" involved three black students trying to a rob a white boy at a convenience store. Two of these three are Jena Six defendants, and one of them crashed the private party. So one of the Jena Six was involved in both racial fights.

On December 4, whatever Barker said at lunch, Bell sucker-punched Barker from behind. Bell's mighty blow knocked Barker out, the *Jena Times* reports, and seven black students kicked and stomped him as he lay defenseless and "lifeless" on the ground. Reported the *Town Talk*, "phrases like 'stomped him badly,' 'stepped on his face,' 'knocked out cold on the ground,' and 'slammed his head on the concrete beam' were used by the students in their statements" about the attack. Other students, the *Times* reported, blocked teachers from stopping the feral attack. The teacher who got to Barker first thought he was dead. What happened to the seventh participant, we are not given to know, but a few of the boys were juveniles, which means their court files are sealed.

And young Bell is no angel. As the *Town Talk*'s headline reported on August 25, "Bell denied bond due to criminal history." The day he attacked Barker, he was on probation for a battery on Christmas Day 2005, and he had been convicted of another battery in September 2006, as well as property-damage incidents in July and September. Other members of the Six, two sources say, are notorious lo-

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cal criminals as well.

As for the "all-white jury," the AP reported, "though black residents were selected randomly by computer and summoned for jury selection, none showed up." And the *Jena Times* reported that "the investigation so far has revealed no link between the fire or noose incidents and several fights throughout Jena over the previous weekend involving black and white students of JHS." Federal gumshoes participated in the investigation.

Could the racial angle be a hoax? The AP found Ben Reid, 61, a black resident of Jena "who set down roots in Jena in 1957 and lived here throughout the civil rights era." Said Reid, "this whole thing ain't no downright, racial affair."

Or at least not the usual racial affair. Whites did not "provoke" the attack. The prosecutor filed the appropriate charges. The national media helped the civil-rights crowd smother the truth. Racism was at work in Jena, all right, but the most dreaded *ism* of them all had nothing to do with nooses and bedsheets. It was antiwhite racism among blacks, including Jackson and Sharpton, which is not part of the media's monochromatic meme. So the story swiftly transmogrified from a heinous crime against a white boy into the "white tree," the nooses, and the saintly football star, culminating in the obligatory parade of seething marchers.

A version of this story replays monotonously, sometimes once or twice year, sometimes every two: Tawana Brawley; the Duke Lacrosse Players; the Jena Six. These events suggest the ugly, unnerving possibility that Jackson, Sharpton, and their gang aren't just race hustlers, but are bitter antiwhite bigots quite happy to see young blacks rape, murder, and otherwise attack whites. Such crimes are a double opportunity to punish whites for their sins—past and present, real and imagined—and permit the Race Mafia not only to revel in the tangible physical punishment blacks inflict upon individual whites but to mete out ideational social retribution and stigmatization upon whites in general.

Guilt-ridden whites, particularly conservatives, want to ignore this explicit and odious antiwhite racism. They hope it will go away. But it won't go away, and ignoring it merely enables the Race Mafia to continue their explicitly antiwhite racial tactics, which, in turn, enervates resistance to those tactics and the nefarious strategy to portray whites as hopeless bigots.

The coin toss, again, is rigged. When will whites stop pretending it isn't?

—*R. Cort Kirkwood*

EVANGELICAL ANTIFEDERALISTS

The Arlington Group, a powerful association of Christian Right leaders, is, to borrow from the author of the *Book of Virtues*, picking a pony. Some ponies, such as Arkansas' Mike Huckabee, just don't look like they can make it to the final stretch. Fred Thompson, on the other hand, could go the distance. The problem is, he's a "federalist."

A President Thompson would be a problem for the Arlington agenda—not because of his apparent aversion to Covenant Marriage, but because he is a "federalist" when it comes to the "gay marriage" question. In an interview with NRO's Jim Geraghty, Arlington member Gary Bauer put it plainly: "Many of us are intrigued and excited by Thompson, but we have great concerns about his advocacy of federalism in dealing with the issue of protecting the sanctity of marriage, and that is certainly an issue we want to discuss with him further."

When it comes to abortion and "gay marriage," Thompson wants the states to decide. He has called for *Roe* v. *Wade* to be overturned, and he supports a constitutional amendment that makes the definition of marriage a state issue. But, as an Arlington source tells Geraghty, "there is concern that the federalist constitutional amendment that he leans toward on marriage just wouldn't work. How can you have a couple married in Massachusetts and then, when they move to Tennessee they're not married anymore?"

Admittedly, that is a legitimate concern, and an unavoidable one whenever government takes it upon itself to "define" something that simply exists apart from the realm of politics, something "defined" by ancient tradition and custom. But that problem is not resolved by the Arlington agenda: It is, instead, made much worse. Geraghty's source continues, "It just seems to our legal people that America is going to end up with one definition of marriage. That's what we want, actually, and we want that definition to be the traditional one . . . We hope to convince all the candidates that on this issue federalism is a not as high a value philosophically as making sure marriage has traditional configuration."

Given Washington's track record, are Christian Right leaders really so naive as to think that the institution of marriage could somehow be "protected" by a federal marriage amendment? Apparently. Is federalism a mere "philosophical" value that has no practical bearing on the protection of America's culture, traditions, and moral values? The Christian Right thinks so. And this only underscores what the late conservative political theorist Samuel Francis wrote in these pages over a decade ago: "The real problem with the religious right is that, in the long run, its religious vehicle won't carry it home. If it ever ended abortion, restored school prayer, outlawed sodomy and banned pornography, I suspect, most of its followers would simply declare victory and retire. But having accomplished all of that, the Christian right would have done absolutely nothing to strip the federal government of the power it has seized throughout this century, restore a proper understanding and enforcement of the Constitution and of republican government, prevent the inundation of the country by anti-Western immigrants, stop

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the cultural and racial dispossession of the historic American people, or resist the absorption of the American nation into a multicultural and multiracialist globalist regime."

That the Christian Right has little regard for federalism (or traditional conservatism), then, isn't breaking news. What's changed is that they're now saying it out loud.

—*Aaron D. Wolf*

ABORTIONISTS THWARTED

The murder of children in the womb in Aurora, Illinois, has been stayed, for the moment. Planned Parenthood, the company that encourages and equips teenagers to fornicate so that it will have a steady stream of babies to kill (over a quarter of a million per year), began building a 22,000-square-foot, $7.5 million abattoir last fall. In secret.

Pulling permits under the name of Gemini Office Development LLC, Planned Parenthood built the abortuary and concealed its purpose not only from the citizens of Aurora but from the tradesmen without whose skill and labor the building would not have been completed. Why? Because four years ago, in Austin, Texas, concrete contractor Christopher Danze brought to a halt the construction of a Planned Parenthood abortuary by rallying his fellow tradesmen and securing their pledges not to work on the project. After slowing the project for several months and costing Planned Parenthood dearly in overruns, the boycott collapsed. City officials bribed competitor Rainbow Concrete with an offer to make Superfund citations from an earlier project disappear. Rainbow made the pour in the middle of the night but went out of business not long after. To Danze, it was divine justice.

To Planned Parenthood, the ordeal that Danze put them through in Austin was a learning experience, one they had no desire to repeat once construction on their bigger, more expensive slaughterhouse in Aurora began. Identifying the building as a medical complex and entering "unknown" where the construction permit asks who the tenant would be, Planned Parenthood very nearly flew in under the radar. Indeed, when their deceit was exposed in July, Planned Parenthood's CEO/Chicago Area, Steve Trombley, remarked, "Frankly, I'm surprised we were able to keep it a secret for so long."

Planned Parenthood's scheme was foiled by a crew member when he shared his suspicions with his parish priest. The priest advised the man to contact Joe Scheidler at the Pro-Life Action League. Joe's son, Eric, who lives in Aurora, quickly enlisted the whole region in an effort to keep the abortuary from opening by forming Fox Families Against Planned Parenthood. Beginning on August 9, members of this grassroots organization staged a round-the-clock, 40-day prayer vigil scheduled to end on September 18—opening day for the clinic.

Were these prayers answered? The clinic did not open on September 18. When the Aurora aldermen learned that Planned Parenthood had not been straight with them, they withheld issuing an occupancy permit and asked Kane County State's Attorney John Barsanti to investigate Gemini and Planned Parenthood for possible criminal conduct. A local zoning attorney, Vince Tessitore, fed Barsanti whatever he could to keep the clinic from opening, including information that Planned Parenthood failed to file for a special-use permit and hold public hearings in accordance with city codes. The Thomas More Society of Chicago did its part to delay the opening with a libel lawsuit against Steve Trombley, who characterized vigil participants as having a "well-documented history of advocating violence against both persons and property." Trombley was doubtless referring to years-old charges brought by the National Organization for Women (NOW) against the Pro-Life Action League, charges of which the League was found not guilty by the U.S. Supreme Court in February 2006. Despite these efforts, however, the abortuary did open on October 2, after investigators concluded that Planned Parenthood had not technically violated any state laws or city ordinances.

Critics of these efforts, even among those who recognize the sanctity of life, point out that, as in this case, they usually fail. So be it. While these legal and political battles failed to stop the opening of the abortuary, Scheidler and son cannot regard their works as a failure. Like Danze did, they have embarrassed Planned Parenthood in the national media, forced them to spend their money, prevented the killing of some babies in the Fox River Valley, and given the rest of us inspiration. They remind us that the most important work fighting the culture of death is that which is done in our own communities and homes. They also remind us that the Christian is concerned not with the effect of his actions but that they are performed well and out of love of God. Saving children from execution, one at a time, and one day at a time, is work performed well.

—*Christopher Check*

OBITER DICTA

Our poetry this month is provided by **Robert Beum**, who resides in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Dr. Beum's poems and essays have appeared in *Modern Age*, the *Sewanee Review*, *National Review*, the *Christian Century*, *Prairie Schooner*, and the *Southwest Review*, among others. His most recent book, *Tradition: Authority and Freedom*, is scheduled for publication in 2008 by Sherwood Sugden and Company.

Our cover is provided by **Sandy Faulkner**, a chicken farmer who lives in Pecatonica, Illinois. Mr. Faulkner grows his own okra.

Interior art is provided by our designer, **Melanie Anderson**. Mrs. Anderson received her B.F.A. from Northern Illinois University.

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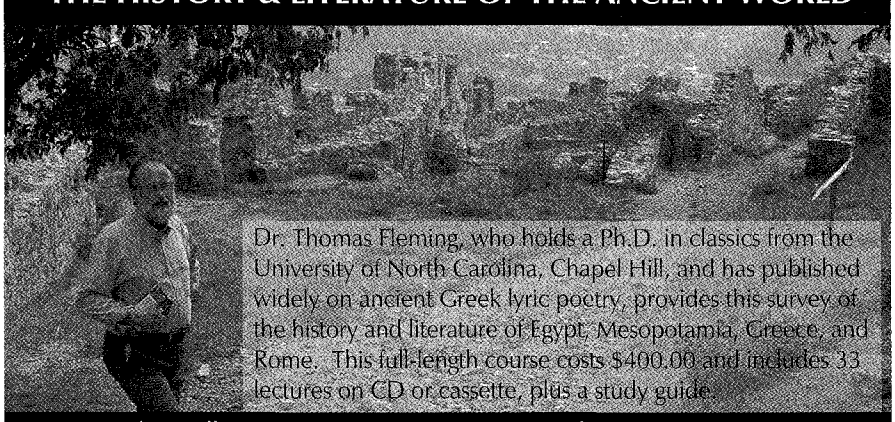

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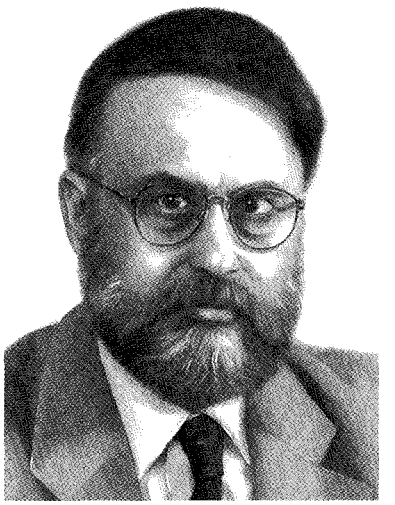
by Thomas Fleming

Wiccan Warming



The summer of 2007 was nearly intolerable here in Northern Illinois. Except for a glorious week in July when the sun, shining bright in the clear sky, never warmed our city to above 80 degrees, the days were an unpleasant mix of heat and humidity, punctuated by a few cool stretches drowned in torrential rains and the rising waters of rivers three feet above flood stage. Rockford was so hot and muggy that trips to Charleston, Baton Rouge, and the Southwest provided my only relief. Former Vice President Gore and his legion of disciples have the inevitable answer: global warming. According to friends (and the rather less reliable evidence of *Weather.com*), France during the same period was experiencing one of the coldest summers in living memory. The explanation for some extreme Greens—and for anyone who saw the movie *The Day After Tomorrow*—is the same man-made phenomenon, global warming.

Perhaps the Greens are right on both counts. I know about as much of climatology and meteorology as I know of French literary theory, but the same can be said of the former Vice President and most environmental activists. The other side, naturally, points out the sloppy reasoning and bad science of the Greens, but, with a few notable exceptions, few of the opponents of the global-warming theory know any more science than Al Gore, and that is saying a great deal. Mr. Limbaugh, who is better informed than most conservatives, simply cannot bring himself to admit that man is capable, in this new millennium, of poisoning the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat, much less of inducing a climate change.

As for me, I simply do not know, and, more to the point, I can probably never know enough to make an informed judgment. A man might spend 20 years reading reports from the Sierra Club and *The Mysterious Climate Project* and know little more than the positions each side claims to believe in. *Que sais-je*? If the polar icecaps are truly melting, stranding all those sweet and cuddly polar bears, I can only say, with Louis XV, "*Après moi le déluge*."

The debate, we are told repeatedly by the wise and scientifically educated gentlemen of the press, is over. Global warming is a reality. The management of Enterprise Rent-A-Car are convinced, and they personally are going to do something to prevent the catastrophe. I am sure these captains of commerce are sincere in their attachment to the green stuff, but if I believed as they do, I should not be taking little baby steps, such as offering flexcars, to reduce emissions, when I could destroy my entire fleet of cars and trucks and quit feeding the carbon-dioxide monkey that sits on the backs of American consumers.

Ordinary people like you and me, who are neither experts nor ideologues, should treat the impending climatic cataclysm with some caution. When I was a child, the newspapers convinced me that, if I drank milk, I would die young from cancer, and my corpse would glow in the dark from all the radioactive Strontium 90 I had consumed. Perhaps they exaggerated the threat.

Free-market economists like to point to the late-19th-century prognostication that, by the 1920's, the streets of London would be buried many feet deep in horse manure. What they conclude from this is that new technology—in this case, the automobile—always comes along to save the day. However, their argument is not quite right. In the first place, automobiles have created many more problems—environmental pollution, the destruction of cities, the dislocation of populations—but, more significantly, they have betrayed their own optimism. It is an insult, both to England and to human nature, to assume that Londoners, an intelligent and enterprising people, could only be saved from their deluge of manure by the likes of Henry Ford.

We all like to be a little bit afraid of the dark, and nothing is darker than the future. In the 1930's and 40's, we could lie awake at night, worrying about Nazi Germany and nationalist Japan. During the Cold War, the threat of communism inspired visions of nations, one by one around the world, collapsing like a long line of dominos. Proponents of the domino theory did not pause to examine their metaphor: Dominos do not fall over by accident or of themselves; they have to be set up by the children who plan the collapse. How many people in, say, Japan or Italy really wanted to worship the corpse of Joe Stalin?

These days, we have transferred our fears, if we are conservative, to Islamic terrorism, or, if we are liberals, to environmental catastrophe. It is not that Muslims and air pollution are not serious threats to our security and health, but they are instrumentalized, as our European friends would say, for political purposes. To continue the Cold War analogy, poor George Kennan, the architect of our containment policy, was soon dismayed by the reckless policies pursued by saber-rattling politicians, eager to show that they had the guts to stand up to the Russians. The same conservatives who used to ridicule *Chronicles* for warning against the threat of Islam are now instrumentalizing Islamophobia to such an extent that it makes my stomach queasy.

In much the same way, Greenies would like to terrify us into totalitarian measures designed to eliminate human civilization—if not humanity itself—from the planet. Global warming is the latest proof that our way of life, especially our bourgeois individualism and weird attachment to private property, is evil. Earlier generations, with more justification, might have referred to the wrath of God visited upon a guilty nation. But we are not a nation of believers but a random conglomeration of consumers, who "all dwell together to make money from each another." We spent the last century worshiping only our belly and the organs located a little below the belly, and now we must be afraid of things that go hiss in the night—hairsprays

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and room deodorizers.

This is an argument familiar to readers of Chesterton, who, although he did not actually say, "when people stop believing in God, they don't believe in nothing—but they will believe in anything," made a similar argument many times. More recently, a nonbeliever (E.O. Wilson) has observed that modern men and women who give up on Christianity turn to the absurdities of Marxism and Scientology. Since the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, Western intellectuals have occupied themselves almost exclusively with finding alternatives to the Christian Faith: Communal living and sociology, art and music, the cult of the state and its heroes, Marxism and American Democratism have all been tried and found wanting; all are nothing more than godlets doomed to fail the duped believers.

That much we all know or ought to know. But, just as the character of a society may be largely determined by the character of its elite class, the ideology of that elite is also instructive, whether it is the Marxist-Leninism of the old Soviet Union or the hedonist consumerism of America in the later 20th century. If global warming is now viewed by environmentalists as an instrument of divine wrath, then what, exactly, is the "god" we have offended, and how is it (we dare not say "he") to be propitiated?

Before answering this question, we should remind ourselves that one leftist revolution does not so much supplant its predecessors as absorb them. Marxism absorbed liberalism's attack on religion, monarchy, and social status, but it also prepared the ground for feminism and globalism. Viewed in another way, anti-Christianity has defined a series of enemies to be eliminated: first, kings, priests, and aristocrats; then capitalists and property owners; then patriarchs, patriots, and other "fascists"; and finally, as C.S. Lewis recognized over 50 years ago, humanity itself. For the most radical Greens, man made in the image of God is the penultimate enemy (our Creator being the ultimate). Nature must be not only unspoiled but an untouched wilderness, "where every prospect pleases and only man is vile."

Blake's romantic misanthropy is now the credo of the environmental idealists, but there is a lower kind of environmentalism, one more compatible with the weakness of the American character. If there is no God or gods, no supranatural dimension beyond the universe perceived by our senses, no possibility of personal survival after death, much less Heaven or Hell, then this physical existence we have on earth is pretty much it. If medical scientists keep making progress and we follow their orders—avoid smoking, drinking, fatty foods, and sodomy—we might see out some 75 to 80 years in sufficiently good health in which we can watch TV and listen to our hearts still beating in the silence of a darkened bedroom. We can let nothing stand in the way either of prolonging this existence or of enjoying it while we can, not even the unborn babies we abort or grind up into elixirs of youth.

If Juvenal's *mens sana in corpore sano* were all we may know on earth and all we need to know, then the physical extinction of a sentient and conscious being would be the ultimate evil, hence the leftist's hatred of capital punishment and enthusiasm for abortion: Unborn babies are not conscious, but they are a punishment for promiscuous sex. It also explains how the same person can weep over the fate of whales, baby seals, and laboratory rats but endorse euthanasia. What is the point to breathing or even thinking, when all the fun is gone?

Environmental pollution, then, is a grave evil because it threatens our health and our existence, and not ours only but the existence of the whole world of living things. The environmental catastrophe that is supposed to result from global warming is Ragnarok, the pagan extinction of the mortal gods and their planetary Valhalla. Better still, it is a post-Christian millennium, when an angry Nature sets free the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

The personification of Nature, while it is hardly a new idea, should strike us as odd. A Roman would not ordinarily have said, "Nature does this or that," or "Nature suffers this or that." He would certainly not use the expression, as the newest edition of a popular Latin book put it, "look at nature" (in the sense of looking at flowers and birds, *etc.*). Nor would a Greek or Roman have spent much time mooning over the fate of the Earth. Now, Gaia was certainly a goddess, but she was a goddess of the earth and not the ball of rocks and dirt bristling with green fuzz on which we live. It is a queer move, when humans begin to speak of "the fate of the planet," as if the planet were a person—and not just a person, but a divine person.

Planet-worship merges with black magic in "Wicca," the incredibly silly cult invented whole cloth by a retired British civil servant in the 1950's. The whole cult is a typical British product of the 50's—as silly as anything on the *Goon Show* but a good deal less probable. Wiccans are mostly harmless cranks who like to dress up and like, even more, to talk endlessly about the religious spoof they believe in. There is nothing surprising in the emergence of superstition in our feeble-minded and humorless age, but what makes Wicca so attractive to the flotsam and jetsam of postmodernity is the religious spin they are able to put on what otherwise might be dismissed as ecofreakism. As Catharine Sanders, authoress of a study of Wiccans, puts it: "Since Wiccans essentially deify the earth, a key element of Wicca is having a positive impact on the environment."

Some bad ideas, as wise old Sir Thomas Browne observed, never go away: "Heresies perish not with their authors, but like the river Arethusa, though they lose their currents in one place, they rise up again in another . . . " Ancient Neoplatonists and Gnostics developed extravagant theories of a hierarchy of divine beings. In some versions, a lower set of divinities is charged with the control of heavenly bodies, as well as the earth itself. In Christianized Gnosticism, the ruler of this world is often identified with the earth's Creator in the Old Testament, an inferior and malicious being who has condemned mankind to a lower, materialistic existence. But for Iamblichus and the pagans, these archons were lords of the universe to be propitiated and put into the service of the magicians we would now call scientists.

Lurking beneath the surface of the Gaia-worshipper's reverence for Nature and his concern for "the planet" is this older idea, of a planetary archon who demands reverence. Because few of them have a name for this being, they are content with descriptive titles in English (Earth or Nature), Latin (Tellus), or Greek (Gaia). However, Christians—and probably some Wiccans advanced in their craft—know his name, though, if they are wise, they do not often speak it, lest the enemy of mankind hear his name and take it for an invitation. In the pre-Christian world there was, perhaps, little harm and much good in reverring the lesser spirits of the created order, but, since the Incarnation, such reverence can mean, ultimately, only one thing. Doing unconscious homage to their master, environmental alarmists—when they are not purely cynical like Al Gore, the former shill for Armand Hammer's Occidental Petroleum—cannot help telling the lies that can only frighten children and the grown-up children who suppose they are atheists. ◁

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Woodrow Wilson, 1917
by Robert Beum

Mouth early withered, not for any kiss
Or honey. Eyes from which abstraction sees
Abstraction, not a morning's freshness. This
Is hurt that sends its manhood overseas.

John Brown Canonized
by Robert Beum

Often you find a heart
Even in a fool.
"Time and again he took
Aim and stayed cool."
Sages of Brotherhood—
Emerson, Lincoln, Stowe—
Behold the Murderer.
"Wounded, he still stood
And shot and shot and shot."
Brothers in Peace, you've found
The marksman you were not.

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by Joseph Sobran

Defending the Normal

Conservatism is usually defined as "opposition to change," "adherence to the old and traditional," and so forth. But, of course, in the Bush-Cheney era, we all feel these familiar tags to be seriously inadequate, even wholly beside the point and downright misleading.

If these men are conservatives, as the news media insist on calling them, the term has changed beyond recognition. It has nothing to do with limited or constitutional government, let alone such old causes as balanced budgets or such ancient virtues as prudence and piety toward the past. In Cheney's phrase, the new Republican regime has "other priorities"—militarism and boundlessly ambitious statecraft. It is as alien to Robert Taft and Barry Goldwater as to Edmund Burke and Dr. Samuel Johnson, all of whom would surely have regarded it with horror.

Still, I don't think it is hard to define *conservatism* usefully. In essence, *conservatism* is the affirmation and defense of the normal. *Liberalism*, by contrast, is a preoccupation with crisis situations that allegedly call for massive state action of a kind conservatism is suspicious of.

I think these definitions pass the simple test of common sense, while leaving room for exceptions and variations. I don't think they are loaded or partisan, and they don't rule out certain elements and tendencies in today's Republicans and neoconservatives we can fairly describe as conservative, even if they have become rather marginal lately (such as opposition to legal abortion and "gay rights").

Best of all, you can be both conservative, in my general sense, and politically liberal, at the same time. I think of the great French director Jean Renoir, who, when asked why there were no villains in his films, explained simply: "Everyone has his reasons." This Shakespearean breadth of sympathy is humane without falling into relativism. "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." It's both deeply moral and slow to condemn. Shakespeare's plays certainly do have villains, terrifying ones, but even they are allowed to have their say. We see ourselves in Iago and Shylock; they have their reasons, too. As the Roman playwright Terence puts it, "I think nothing human is alien to me."

So the conservative can recognize marriage as normal and sodomy as perversion without wishing to force men to be virtuous, or even thinking that possible; it is the liberal idiom that speaks freely of "eliminating" vice (though it speaks not of "vice," but of "racism," "prejudice," and "poverty"); in the moralistic (though amoral) liberal universe, there is no need for trade-offs, which is to say, for prudence.

And just as the liberal dreams of doing away with poverty and racism forever, so President Bush aspires to eliminate terrorism and tyranny from the face of the earth, once and for all. His quasi-Trotskyite dream, or "ideal," of a "global democratic revolution" is about as far from conservatism as it is possible to get. The conservative doesn't traffic in dreams and ideals; he is interested in achievable norms, the kind men have always lived by and always will. He can, for example, sympathize with the homosexual; for that matter, he may be one himself; in any case, he knows himself to be a sinner, an imperfect man. He is not disposed to condemn his fellow sinners unless they are obdurate and refuse to honor the normal. After all, he doesn't claim normality for his own sins. (The simplest proof that homosexuality is abnormal is that nobody, however tolerant, can wish it on his own son.)

The normal is not the same thing as the average, the typical, the ordinary. In a sense, it may be rare, as the saints are rare. In our own weakness, we look to it for guidance, even if we never expect to reach it. However far we may depart from it in our conduct, we can always find our way back to it.

In this sense, the Christian would say that Jesus Christ is normal; whereas sin is, by its nature, abnormal, eccentric. Peace and liberty are normal, however elusive they may be; but the Cold War, tragically, inured many conservative Christians to the assumption that war (and preparations for it) can bring both peace and freedom, an assumption Bush and his minions have exploited for all it's worth. No wonder so many Americans now mistake militarism for conservatism.

Bush's feeble sense of normality is evident in his moralistic insistence that *democracy* (a term he uses interchangeably with *freedom*) is a universal human aspiration, implanted in every soul by God. He was convinced that, with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, democracy would blossom—spontaneously, explosively, contagiously—throughout the Middle East. When that failed to happen, did he admit his error? Not at all. Instead, he proceeded as if all resistance to the American occupation ("liberation") were motivated by the same evil for which he blamed Saddam—"terrorism."

Of course, there is an obvious sense in which we all want to be free: We would all like to be able to act without restraint. But this is very different from wanting all others to be equally free; it is more likely to mean just the opposite. Bush is conceptually confused to a degree remarkable for a mature and intelligent man, let alone one who has been educated at two of the best universities in the United States. (It has been said that the chief difference between America and the European nations is that most of their heads of state speak fluent English.)

My purpose here is not to attack Bush; it is merely to point out an alarming fact: that he passes for a conservative among people, by no means idiots, who really think of themselves as conservatives. Some of these people, as I wrote a few years ago, seem to believe that government should be confined to two essential functions: paving the streets and ruling the world. At the moment, it's not doing either of these things very impressively.

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Agrarians, Greenies, and Goreites

To the Next Generation

by Tom Landess

Since its publication in 1930, *I'll Take My Stand* has never been out of print, and each succeeding generation produces new disciples, though sometimes with a slightly different take on the original document. In recent years, some have seen in the Agrarian critique of industrial America a precursor of Al Gore's *Earth in the Balance* and the Unabomber's tracts. The resemblance is, at most, superficial. The current "green movement" is either an ideology or a partisan political strategy. Sometimes, it is difficult to tell the difference. The Agrarians were not abstract thinkers, utopians, or devious partisans.

They and most of their followers came from small towns and farming communities. What they defended was not the Old South "aristocracy"—which they said never really existed—but the small family farm, a number of which they drove past whenever they had a good reason to go to town. It was the New South advocates who were the utopians; and the utopia they fantasized—a region coughing smoke and churning out jobs and dollars—turned out to be the worst nightmare of their philosophical heirs, the Goreites.

Al Gore grew up in a posh hotel in the nation's capital, where he sat in a corner and listened while left-wing Democrats talked about the egalitarian society they planned to establish, just as soon as they got rich themselves. He went to an exclusive Washington prep school and then to Harvard, where everyone was required to take Ideology 101. Gore's apocalyptic vision of a planet ruined by the greed of rich America came straight out of these hothouses of unproved ideas. I suspect that virtually all of Al Gore's myrmidons also came from the cities, where the battle had been lost more than a century earlier, when enlightened "developers" such as John Jacob Astor began to pave the sidewalks so that New Yorkers could trip the Light Fantastic with Mamie O'Rourke. (Michael Moore, who once edited *Mother Jones*, grew up in Flint, Michigan, whose chief pride is the auto industry.)

I knew five of the original twelve contributors to *I'll Take My Stand*, and I have known a number of their followers—second- and third-generation Agrarians. Their love of the land had little to do with the abstractions and enormities of Al Gore's Chicken Little scenario. Though the Agrarians and their disciples were, from the beginning, deeply disturbed about what industrialism was doing to the land, the water, and the sky, they were essentially concerned with more important matters. As for the Goreites, you have the idea that if they knew the polar bears would be cold enough and Kansas City would not end up 20,000 leagues under the sea, they would be happy enough to see America degenerate into a Third World country. Not so, the Agrarians and their followers.

By way of contrast to Al Gore, Michael Moore, and half of Hollywood, let me offer an exemplum of the kind of person who was influenced by *I'll Take My Stand* and, at Vanderbilt, by a teacher such as Donald Davidson. The quintessential second-generation Agrarian, his name was Edwin "Buddy" Godsey.

Buddy was the natural Agrarian, who understood what the contributors of the symposium were saying before he ever read or heard the words. I was bewildered by the instinctive quality of this wisdom; and I remain in awe of his rapport with Mr. Davidson, who was like an Old Testament God to me—remote, nameless, and terrifying.

Buddy had grown up on a medium-sized farm in Bristol. Half of the town was in Tennessee, half in Virginia. He was a mountain boy and spoke with a mountain accent—the hard *r*'s, the drawn-out diphthongs, the twang. He pronounced *Tennessee* with a strong emphasis on the first syllable. His father was way up in his 70's and believed in beating the devil out of his two sons. He routinely inflicted severe pain on Buddy—so much so that, once when they were working out in the field, Wiley, the hired man, told Mr. Godsey, "Will, if you hit that boy one more time, I'll kill you."

Instead of breaking him, the harsh discipline made him tough—mentally and emotionally as well as physically. He contracted diabetes as a small child and was plagued by the disease for the rest of his life. But when he and I roomed together at Vanderbilt, the only evidence I ever saw that he was a diabetic was a syringe in the refrigerator. I never saw him use it, and he never complained. So he was no spoiled kid; no sentimentalist, long on sympathy and short on good sense; no easy prey for the left, its croker sack stuffed with *ad misericordiam* arguments.

Also, his respect for nature and its gifts sprang from no abstract sense of brotherhood with possums and poison ivy. He spent much of his youth hunting and fishing in the mountains and valleys of East Tennessee and appreciated more than most what civilization had left for him—in that part of the state, vaulting hills, mountains, streams, and at least one good river. The developers came later.

No one had to alarm Buddy with the wild speculation that Nashville would be under water in a few generations if America did not abolish the internal-combustion engine. He saw the problems that industrialization brought. He had read Rachel Carson, and he contributed regularly to the Sierra Club, when most people had never heard of the organization and when it was still a group without a radical political agenda.

In his small way, he merely wanted to preserve the world of particulars that existed for him and for everyone else in that part of the earth—doves, quail, and deer, brought down with

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buckshot, and trout taken from a mountain stream so cold it froze your toes inside socks and boots. Those spoils of the earth—and the oaks, maples, pines, and brush that sustained them—were worth the dollars he contributed and the brilliant poems he wrote on the subject.

He came to teach at Converse College, where I had been on the faculty for several years; and when my wife and I bought a house in the country with 22 acres of farmland attached, Buddy suggested that we plant a large garden, one that covered a couple of acres. He knew what he was doing. Had done it before. So he was the plantation owner, and I was the sharecropper. He told me what to plant and how to hoe; and I did what he said—the two of us working side-by-side in the afternoons, after we had taught our classes and met our office hours. We planted rows and rows of corn (three different varieties), field peas and black-eyed peas, tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, watermelons, cantaloupes, grapevines, and okra.

The corn sprouts were the first to appear, along with some weeds; and I couldn't tell the difference; so Buddy had to drive 40 miles round-trip to show me which ones to execute and which ones to spare. By the middle of summer, we were looking at some heartening successes and some frustrating failures. The squash bloomed, then died—and no squash to eat. (We figured we had planted all females or all males.) By the time the watermelons ripened, they had rotted on their undersides. Some ears of corn had turned a malignant green inside; and the grapevines didn't produce a single grape, much less enough to make a bottle of wine.

But our successes were spectacular, at least to me. My wife and Buddy had grown up on farms. I had never eaten corn or tomatoes or cucumbers right out of the field. They are entirely different vegetables from the ones by the same name that you bought and still buy at Piggly Wiggly, shipped in from Mexico or Guatemala, with stickers that say "vine ripened." (No one who buys groceries exclusively at a chain store has the right to believe in the idea of progress.)

We had an Indian summer that year, and, though the corn stalks, stripped of their ears, turned brown and bowed their heads toward the coming winter, the tomatoes and okra continued to flower and bear. I remember standing in late November on the front porch, shivering, watching a cold autumn wind whip the yellow-green okra flowers, looking a little like forlorn tulips. A few days later, they were all gone.

Next year, we didn't plant a garden. Buddy and I and two others—in protest against what we regarded as the mistreatment of a colleague—resigned our positions at Converse. I was able to keep the house for another year by teaching at nearby Furman University. Buddy took a job at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

He and his wife, Julia, bought 90 acres of land in the country, which included a small lake. He intended to raise his daughter and two sons in an unpaved plot of earth where the seasons were still distinguishable and where you didn't hear the screech of tires at 3 AM or smell the poisonous air of the city in dead winter. Greater Charlotte had just proclaimed itself an area of over a million people. Buddy wanted to get his family away from all that, and he seemed to have found the ideal spot—not Walden (a hiding place for a weird little mama's boy), but a way of holding urban America at arm's length. Since they lived only an hour and a half away from our place in South Carolina, we visited them several times during the summer and watched their two boys doing cannonballs off the dock into the lake.

In February, I came home from Furman in the late afternoon, the sky already dark, the roads iced over. My wife gave me the grim news: Joe—the younger of the two boys and my godson—had fallen through the ice that covered the lake. Buddy had broken his way through in an effort to save Joe. Both had drowned. By the time we arrived, with Julia and the two surviving children huddled glassy-eyed by a fire, police and divers were already down by the lake, flashlights and lanterns casting shadows across the cold, snow-bound earth. In an hour or so, Julia's brother Frank arrived from Tennessee; and by then, Mary Beth and Julia had packed what needed to be taken. Just before Frank, Julia, and the family left, a policeman came up to the house to say that both bodies had been recovered.

Like Andrew Lytle, we have acknowledged our ultimate defeat but have not given up the fight. It affords us too much pleasure. Besides, the next generation is promising—young, formidable, their minds honed to the sharpness of an executioner's ax. All we require of them is a few severed heads before we move along, beyond the sounds of battle.

As we drove back to South Carolina, I recalled a conversation I'd had with Buddy a few years earlier. We had talked about dying, and agreed that wasting away with cancer or Lou Gehrig's disease would be the worst. As for quick deaths, I said I most feared falling from a great height. He said for him it would be drowning.

Though I had always thought Buddy and I had come from different backgrounds, looking back over his life and my own, I see the similarities. I grew up in Sarasota, Florida, where, until after World War II, the county (population, around 8,000 in 1940) maintained a fine balance between agriculture and tourism. The farmers—who lived out in the very rural county—raised cattle, tomatoes, and celery for cash crops, ate their homegrown vegetables, and butchered their own hogs and an occasional cow. They would come to town on Saturdays to do the week's shopping and to visit with one another along Main Street, while their kids ran up and down the sidewalk, shooting at each other with ten-cent cap guns.

We lived in town, where my father was a dentist and where the cash crop was Yankees, so I paid little attention to what the farmers did. Indeed, the fact that Florida was then the second-largest cattle-producing state seemed more an embarrassment than a virtue. At 12, I read *Time* and the *New Yorker* and won-

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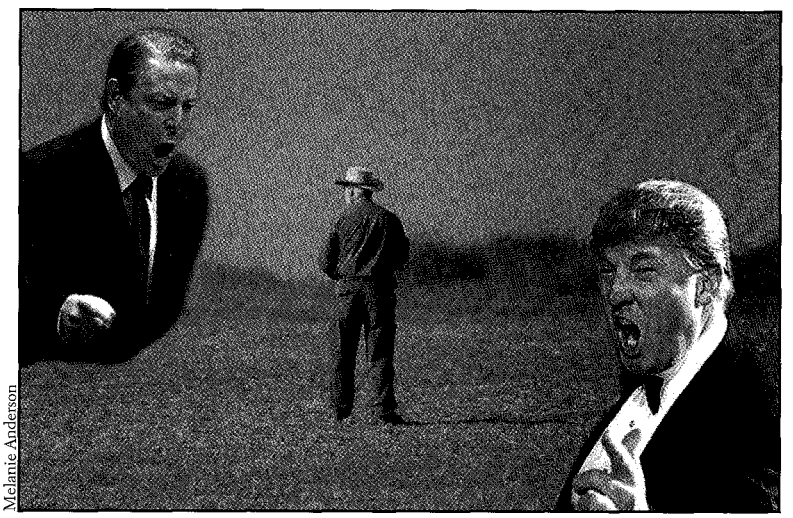
dered why a just and merciful God had allowed me to grow up in such a backward region. After two years at a New England prep school, God suddenly seemed more benevolent than I had previously suspected. When I graduated from Vanderbilt, I was a second-generation Agrarian, not because of *I'll Take My Stand*, but because of Mr. Davidson and Buddy Godsey.



Melanie Anderson

I could mention other second-generation Agrarians—particularly, the late M.E. Bradford, who came to the Vanderbilt graduate program a thoroughgoing Hegelian and left as perhaps Mr. Davidson's most finished product. His books of political philosophy have caused a scandal in the liberal academic community and have helped to create a third generation of neo-Agrarians. He is known and unreasonably hated for his analyses of Abraham Lincoln's rhetoric, despite the fact that he only published four essays on our 16th President. Mel's father raised Charolais cattle on a small ranch in Oklahoma, and Mel was a lover and chronicler of what was left of the Old West and its losing battle with big cities. Together, while colleagues, we battled out-of-control development in Irving, Texas; managed some 15 city-council campaigns; and became known by the developers as "those liberal University of Dallas professors." At that time, it never occurred to any of us that the left would swoop down and turn love of nature and the land into a monstrous apocalyptic ideology that would demand the voluntary surrender of America's freedom and give nightmares to small school children. So we today have two enemies. It's Hobson's choice: Al Gore or Donald Trump.

Right now, it looks as if the ideological environmentalists are winning the public-relations war. Hordes of scientists—who can be just as partisan as precinct captains—have received their orders and are marching in lockstep toward a computer-model apocalypse. The polar bears will die of heat stroke. The oceans will wash across Detroit, Topeka, and Boulder. The Rockies will crumble. Gibraltar will tumble.

As for the remaining Agrarians, there are few of the second-generation members left, our numbers rapidly diminishing, most of us old and gray and full of sleep. Like Andrew Lytle, we have acknowledged our ultimate defeat but have not given up the fight. It affords us too much pleasure. Besides, the next generation is promising—young, formidable, their minds honed to the sharpness of an executioner's ax. All we require of them is a few severed heads before we move along, beyond the sounds of battle. ◁

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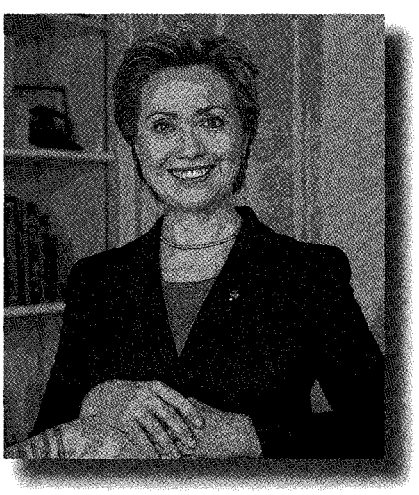
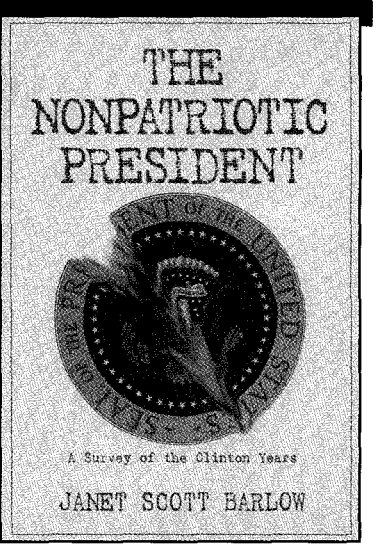


The Nonpatriotic President

A Survey of the Clinton Years

by Janet Scott Barlow



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Planes, Trains, and Automobiles

The High Environmental Cost of Too Much Freedom

by Tobias J. Lanz

Melanie Anderson

Social conservatives have long argued that radical individualism—the essence of modern freedom—is corrosive to family and community life, and, if left unchecked, can even lead to civilizational collapse. But another, perhaps more damning, charge today is that individualism is bad for the environment. This seems paradoxical, as modern man sees himself as the quintessential environmentalist and his modern "freedom-loving" societies as the world's environmental leaders. Underlying this green rhetoric, there is the simple fact that modern freedoms are ultimately material freedoms. As such, they are dependent on energy and resource flows. The more freedom, the more resources used, and the greater the pressures on the physical environment.

Freedom-loving societies have the highest levels of resource consumption on earth—by far. America is the paragon of individual freedom; she is also the global leader in resource use. We have five percent of the world's population, yet consume a quarter of the world's resources. The industrial nations of Europe and Asia, who often see America as the world's great environmental villain, are not far behind. Together with the United States, all of the world's freedom-loving nations (the so-called advanced industrial democracies) comprise about 25 percent of the population and consume about 75 percent of the world's resources.

In addition to powerful states and markets, all freedom-loving societies have strong economies that can channel money and transform resources in amazing ways. This, in turn, also transforms these people's lives. The "right to choose," "enlightened self-interest," "upward mobility," "opportunity" and all the other noble terms used to describe modern freedoms are made possible by the unprecedented access and control of money and industrial products.

The automobile is the greatest symbol of individual freedom. A sign of status and social mobility, it is also the basis of the entire modern industrial system, intimately connected to the production of steel, glass, rubber, plastic, concrete, asphalt, and, of course, oil and gas. Even if global warming is not real, imminent, or the result of human action, the list of environmental costs associated with automobiles and all their related industries is long. They create air pollution, toxic waste, and sprawling cities that tear up ever more farms and forests so that freedom can spread far and wide. Hybrid cars, which use less fuel, are still dependent on polluting industries and do not slow traffic or urban sprawl in any way.

The desire for "personal space" has dramatically changed the way Americans and other freedom-loving peoples live. Houses are bigger and spread further from work and shopping than ever before. More energy and resources are now consumed per household, even as family size declines. Many freedom-lovers also live alone. Some purposefully eschew children to protect the planet from overpopulation. Yet, individuals living alone consume more resources *per capita* than people living in families. Homosexuals have some of the highest rates, another reason they have become the darlings of the corporate world; they spend and consume as if there were no tomorrow.

In recent years, high technology has become most synonymous with individual freedom, because its many products—cell phones, iPods, Blackberries, and computers—are so personalized. High-tech gurus also argue they are creating a new and better way of life for everyone, one that is greener than that based on coal, steel, and oil. This, too, is an illusion. The manufacture of silicon chips, the heart of the high-tech revolution, produces enormous amounts of waste, much of

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it toxic, because they require so much water and acid to process. Despite the promise of a paperless economy, paper use keeps increasing. (People keep printing out those darned e-mails!) Energy use also increases as more people spend time on computers, as does the amount of e-junk because of the rapid obsolescence of electronic gadgets. Most ironic is that the high-tech generation, so proud of being cutting edge in every way, has yet to jettison their automobiles—a 19th-century technology.

Good conservation is based on stewardship and subsidiarity; it begins with the individual and community, then radiates outward.

The eating habits of freedom-lovers also have high environmental costs. The general disdain for such dirty work as cooking and cleaning has created an enormous food and restaurant industry, which is centered on convenience and variety. The average freedom-lover today eats better than any traditional monarch. This modern food culture has a price, however. To satisfy consumer demands, the average food item in America travels 1,500 miles to its final destination. Fast, frozen, and processed foods further increase resource use as they require more packaging and storage. Despite all the technologies designed to preserve food—refrigeration, freezing, canning, drying, chemical preservatives—half of all food produced in America is never consumed. It goes to waste somewhere in the lengthy production-consumption cycle.

Freedom lovers also demand richer and more exotic foods. Goods such as coffee, tea, chocolate, sugar, and tropical fruits were once specialty items. Meat and fatty foods were eaten sparingly. Today, they are staples. These foods require considerable energy to transport. They also require a lot to produce, because the higher a food's caloric content, the higher its resource needs. For example, it takes far more water and land to raise a pound of meat than it does a pound of grain. And as demand for these luxury goods increases, so does production. In the case of animals, this leads to factory farms, where thousands of creatures are packed together in inhumane conditions and pumped with growth hormones for quick sale. This large volume of animals creates an equally large volume of waste that constantly threatens water and air quality, not to mention human health.

Even those purists who desire a healthier and more humane diet—vegans and vegetarians—still use considerable energy and resources. Organic produce often travels farther than other foods to satisfy these specialized demands. Much of it winds up at Wal-Mart, which is becoming the number one seller of organic produce in the United States. Soybeans are an important substitute for animal protein. But they are hard on soils, and, as demand for them increases, more forests are cleared, especially in the tropics. Grocery stores now have entire freezer sections dedicated to healthy and organic foods, making electrical utility shareholders especially proud they are helping create both a healthier and a greener planet.

Freedom-lovers also love traveling. But these new globetrotters are far different from those of the past, for whom the enjoyment and study of architecture, language, and geography was an art. Travel is now an industry, and, like all industries, it pollutes on a grand scale. The biggest problem is that freedom-lovers want all their freedoms (air-conditioning, bottled water, rich foods, and technical gadgets) wherever they go. African safari lodges serve spreads that outdo any American luxury hotel. Mount Everest is littered with hundreds of tons of trash, as are countless other tourist "getaways." Yosemite Valley, once known for its tranquility, is now packed with RVs and cars blaring radios in the name of freedom. What better place to listen to the L.A. Lakers while munching on a bucket of factory-farmed chicken, followed by a Snickers bar, all washed down by a Coke?

Defenders of freedom-loving societies are quick to note that, despite this conspicuous consumption, these industries all create jobs. They will also argue that, thanks to effective political and economic institutions and superior technology, freedom-loving societies have far better environmental records than communist regimes, Muslim theocracies, or Third World dictatorships. They could teach these people a thing or two, not only about freedom, but also about the environment. It is true that freedom-loving societies have progressively improved their environment over the last century. Los Angeles air is cleaner than it was 30 years ago. Ohio has more forests than it did in 1900, and salmon now swim in the Thames. But problems remain.

One problem is that freedom-loving societies have shifted many of their most environmentally destructive industries overseas. In addition to agriculture and raw-material extraction, manufacturing is rapidly being moved to the developing world. This is partly because of cheap labor, but also because there are few or no environmental standards in any of these countries. Newly industrializing countries such as India, China, and Mexico have some of the worst environmental conditions on earth.

And these developing countries are creating their own freedom-loving classes, which raises the question, How many freedom-lovers can the earth sustain? If every person in India consumed as the average American does, it would take several extra planets to provide all the resources. And if poor countries cannot supply freedom quickly and thoroughly enough, those desiring freedom emigrate. Where do they go? To the freedom-loving countries, which must all deal with the problem of their massive material wealth in the face of the destitute who want it. Furthermore, these massive migration movements depend on large energy and resource flows. Trucks, cars, buses, boats, and planes are constantly on the move. Even those traveling on foot, such as the illegal aliens crossing the Southern border of the United States, spread trash, burn things, poach, and trample delicate ecosystems.

The biggest problem lies with the freedom-loving societies and the way they define *environment* and *freedom*. Like everything else in their world, these concepts are viewed in abstract and utilitarian terms. *The environment* is defined as "natural resources," for human use; or "wilderness," a place of escape; or an "ecosystem," a series of complex and interconnected parts. *Freedom* has simply become "the right to do what one likes," which is equally problematic. Freedom has been thoroughly individualized, reduced to selfishness and greed—the fulfillment of appetite. And for freedom-lovers, the environment is for immediate use and pleasure without regard for its

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ecological integrity or value to future generations.

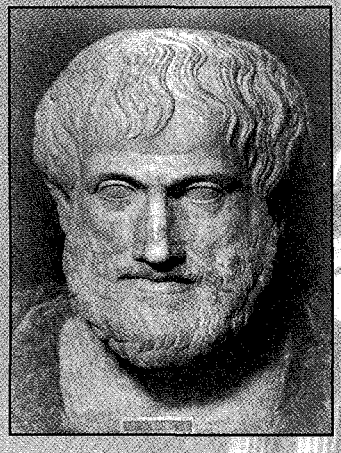
Modern environmental policy is equally flawed because it is built around these same concepts. The government and the marketplace exist to manage man's freedoms. Paradoxically, they also have to prevent man from becoming too destructive of the environment. So, government spends millions of dollars to protect fragile habitats while simultaneously granting developers tax breaks to destroy them. Industry produces many wonderful green technologies and products while constantly pushing to expand production and consumption.

We need to redefine *freedom* and *the environment*. First, *freedom* must mean something more than the pursuit of material pleasures and products. Material consumption is *part* of human existence, not the whole of it. Materialism must be balanced by nonmaterial or spiritual pursuits. The importance of tranquility and beauty must be paramount in any environmental discussion. The ideas of reverence and piety toward all living things must also be stressed over purely utilitarian values.

Second, we must realize that *the environment* is more than just a physical place. It is a living thing as well as something spiritual, a world where humans interact with one another, plants, animals, mountains, valleys, rivers, and seas to create cultures and civilizations. Our distortion of freedom is linked precisely to the fact that the physical world we inhabit is no longer seen in this way. Perhaps, we should jettison *the environment* entirely and replace it with *Creation*. As Wendell Berry has noted, *Creation* is connected to such words as *creature*, *creativity*, and *Creator*. As a creature, every man is duty-bound to add to and maintain that great and mysterious process of Creation through his creativity.

Finally, a more sustainable and livable world requires more than good government and effective markets: It requires greater personal morality and responsibility. Good conservation must be based on stewardship and subsidiarity, which begins with the individual and community and then radiates outward. Families and communities should strive to be as self-reliant as possible. Locally grown and seasonal foods (as well as other products) should be given priority over those shipped long distances and from exotic locales. Smaller homes constructed of local materials should be sought out, preferably within walking or biking distance to work, church, and shopping. Work at home, if possible. A greater focus on local production should be matched with an overall reduction in consumption. In the end, the focus must be on living simply. The simple and virtuous life, that which minimizes personal and immediate satisfaction, is intrinsically beneficial to society and the physical environment. It is also instinctively conservative.

The so-called environmental crisis is really a facet of the broader cultural crisis. Both involve disconnection—in one case, from the surrounding geography and its plant and animal communities; in the other, from the human community and its history and traditions. All of this is really the fruit of modernity. But, as Chesterton once said, the modern world is not wrong; it is crazy. Its technologies and institutions are not necessarily bad, but out of balance. It is up to conservatives to begin to reveal these excesses and contradictions. The conservative way is not a panacea. Rather, it is a corrective—the injection of prudence and wisdom into an unhealthy organism. It is the ability to see nature and culture holistically and to find holistic remedies. If those remedies are not applied soon, we may all perish from too much freedom. ◈



The Greek Conservative Mind

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Edward Abbey

Conservative Conservationist—and Controversialist

by Gregory McNamee

Edward Abbey never met a controversy he didn't like. Philosopher of the barroom and the open sky, champion of wilderness, critical gadfly, fierce advocate of personal liberty, Enemy of the State writ large: For 40-odd years, Ed roamed the American West, a region, he wrote, "robbed by the cattlemen, raped by the miners, insulted by the tourists." As he traveled, he stirred up trouble by, among other things, poking ungentle and sometimes dangerous fun at cowboys, Indians, women, Mormons, Hispanics, and, above all, the agents of supposed economic progress—realtors, captains of industry, county supervisors, car dealers, developers. He was an equal-opportunity curmudgeon: Liberal and conservative alike felt his righteous wrath, which seemed to grow as the years piled on. And he liked the fight, wherever it found him or he found it. "Racial, sexual, cultural differences: forbidden ideas; we're not supposed to think such things, much less say them out loud," he grumbled in his journals, published in 1994 as *Confessions of a Barbarian*. "Yet it is fun to bring them up."

He has been dead for nearly 20 years, felled by a bad pancreas on March 14, 1989, but the shaken-hornet's-nest legacy of his stands intact. You can start a debate—and even a fistfight—anywhere from Missoula to Mexico City merely by mentioning his name.

I once went into a bar in Rock Springs, Wyoming, to grab a soda for the long ride to Jackson. Not long before, Abbey had given a speech at the University of Montana in which, among other things, he said,

> Suppose you had to spend most of your working hours sitting on a horse, contemplating the hind end of a cow. How would that affect your imagination? Think what it does to the relatively simple mind of the average peasant boy, raised amid the bawling of calves and cows in the spatter of mud and the stink of sh-t.

Tough words in beef country, not guaranteed to win friends. A bullish cowboy at the bar took a look at my Arizona license plates, pulled himself up, and said, "You from Arizona? You know Abbey?" When I answered "Yes," he said, "Get out." I did.

Ed didn't start out to be a scrapper, although he remarked that his Scots-Irish ancestry and upbringing in the Appalachian Mountains of Pennsylvania, both good ingredients for rebelliousness, predisposed him to disliking both authority and received wisdom. He was inclined to a kind of Thoreauvian, backwoods conservatism that prized self-reliance and self-education and disdained indolence, a credo that mistrusted any *-cracy* but meritocracy. He frequently ran into trouble when putting this ideal into practice, as when he was dressed down for not saluting an officer while in the military—perhaps ironically, as a military policeman—in the closing days of World War II. He remarked of this misadventure that he would salute a man anytime, but a uniform never. The Army, naturally enough, frowned on Abbey's insistence that he be allowed to choose whom to salute, but he made out all right—and pressed the case in other arenas for the rest of his life.

He wanted to be remembered as a great writer, not as an activist, and he wrote a few novels—*Black Sun*, *The Brave Cowboy*, *Fire on the Mountain*—that earned him esteem as one of his generation's most promising authors. But somewhere along the line, he decided that the West, to which he had moved in the early 1950's after doing time in the Army and in New York City, had suffered enough at the hands of developers, logging firms, mines, corporate ranches, and other instruments of progress, which is so often regress. He began to speak out—no, to bellow out loud and long, arguing against the *status quo* in every medium he could find. Out this way, in many circles, he is still remembered more for his finely honed political rage than for his art.

I first laid eyes on Ed sometime in 1981, if memory serves, at a rally in Tucson against visiting Secretary of the Interior James Watt, the great satan of the environmental movement, who was then busily giving away the public domain to his wealthy patrons. Ed was the guest star of the unruly event, and his presence had been heavily advertised on posters and in ads in the alternative weekly. Ed seemed not to take that duty too seriously. He showed up bleary and much the worse for the wear after what appeared to have been a couple of weeks of nonstop drinking, mumbled a few semicoherent words about the evils of corporatism, growled, "God bless America—let's save some of it," and stumbled off into the night.

It turned out, Ed later told me, that he had in fact been drinking nonstop in the company of his "redneck radical" friends, planning and plotting the birth of Earth First!, the fringe environmental movement that, with Ed's help and participation, would later give Watt and his successors so many headaches. The movement was inspired by Ed's 1975 novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, in which a band of ecoradicals performed what he called "unauthorized maintenance on big yellow machines," the Caterpillar tractors and earthmovers then as now busily blading over the commons. (Such equipment on private property, Ed insisted, was regrettable but off-limits.) Abbey called the book—a version of which is slated to make the silver screen sometime next year—a "comic extravaganza," but many of his readers and followers took it more seriously than all that. Certainly, the FBI did: Ed's file grew by several inches after the book appeared. He was pegged as a Marxist,

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Gregory McNamee writes from Tucson, Arizona. He is the author, most recently, of Moveable Feasts *(Praeger, 2006).*

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but his politics were far from those of that other graybeard.

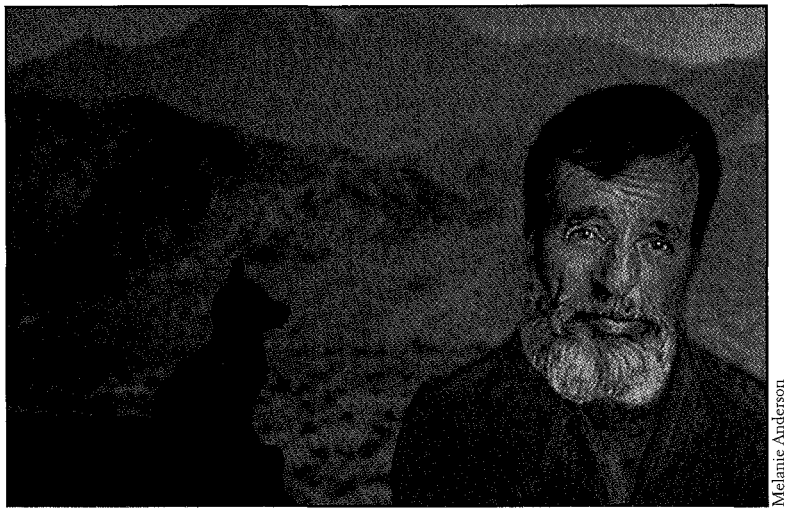
I got to know Ed better when, asked by a magazine editor to write an essay about Abbey's politics, I decided to go straight to the source. Now, most writers at a certain stage of renown either guard their privacy jealously or slaver for still more publicity, but Ed did neither. Instead, he answered my questions courteously, pointed out flaws and overgeneralizations, and grumbled when my elegant theses about his views on anarchism, conservatism, and democracy got, well, too elegant. (He was right about that, and he would complain in his journals that the essay I eventually wrote placed "too much stress on my politics, no mention of the love and humor in my books"—about which, more in a minute.) For Ed, the story wasn't himself or his politics, but the need for direct action against the land rapists and developers, for constant struggle against the enemies of the Bill of Rights (the Second Amendment as well as the First, for Ed delighted in twitting liberals with his lifetime membership in the National Rifle Association), and for rage against the machine.

We quickly agreed that the kinds of conversations we needed to have about such weighty matters would better take place in a bar or greasy spoon than in a library, and, over the next seven years, we met regularly to talk politics or books or the latest assault on the landscape. When we went for the first time to a tony, now-defunct fern bar in the unlikely heart of downtown Tucson, Ed walked through the swinging doors and bellowed, "Smells like lawyers in here!" It was a safe enough bet, given the bar's proximity to the city's courthouse and downtown's countless law offices, and a dozen-odd carefully coiffed heads turned toward the door in reply. But the lawyers quickly turned back to their drinks. They had seen Abbey in action—everyone in Tucson, it seemed, had had an Abbey moment at one time or another—and they were not biting.

At our meetings, Ed, grinning wolfishly, would produce letters that he had written to such recipients as the *New York Times*, Ronald Reagan, the *Nation*, and Gloria Steinem, all of them raising pet peeves to the status of an ideology. "The fine art of making enemies," he wrote in his journals. "I've become remarkably good at it." Steinem was a favorite target, for he especially liked tweaking feminists, which may explain why he found so few women readers. He would be booed at readings throughout the 1980's for insisting that he was a poet as well as a prose writer, then reciting scurrilous erotic lyrics bearing titles unsuited to citation in a family publication—and anathema to the politically watchful guardians of the academy, who grudgingly invited Ed to appear there and then professed to be shocked when he did what he did. No friends they of the First Amendment—or, for that matter, of the Second.

Abbey's harshest moment in the spotlight came at about that time, when he began to publish a series of letters to the editors and essays on the subject of illegal immigration. Noting that the subject, like abortion and nuclear energy, was almost impossible to discuss unemotionally, Abbey insisted that the border between the United States and Mexico be sealed off with electric fences and patrolled by the military—strange talk for a self-professed anarchist. He did not help his case, which, he said, was based on environmental grounds (the United States was already overcrowded), by insisting that the American way of life had to be protected against the Mexican threat "to degrade and cheapen [it] downward to the Hispanic standard." Cowboys are one thing, he found; politically well-organized ethnic groups, quite another. For the rest of his days, Abbey would be accused of racism, a damning charge against which he did not try to defend himself, but that gave him much pain, assured as he was that most people, as individuals, are merely fallen angels like himself, deserving of respect and courtesy. Lawyers, on the other hand . . .

Just before he died, Ed published *The Fool's Progress*, what he called his "honest novel," one loosely based on his own life. In its opening pages, Abbey's alter ego, one Henry Lightcap, takes off from his nearly empty Tucson home (its contents having just been removed by a disgruntled spouse) after shooting his refrigerator, a hated symbol of civilization. Lightcap makes a winding journey by car to his boyhood home in the Appalachian Mountains of Pennsylvania, calling on old friends along the road, visiting reservations and out-of-the-way taverns, and reminiscing about the triumphs and failures of his life. Readers would be mistaken to view *The Fool's Progress* as pure autobiography, but it looks deeply into his life and times and way of thinking. Abbey regarded it as one of his best books of fiction, and he was right to do so: It is full of wonderful moments, and the story stands as a mature rejoinder to Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, one of Ed's favorite novels.



Melanie Anderson

I had edited a 20th-anniversary reissue of *Desert Solitaire*, the book for which Ed is best known, and Ed asked me to read the manuscript of "Fool's Progress" before he sent it off to the publisher. I did, and I wrote him that, while I thought the book very fine, I was disturbed by some of the humor, which I—no liberal—thought strayed into the very perception of racism that was causing him so much trouble. ("What's the difference between Navajos and yogurt?" went one joke. "Yogurt is a living culture.") I asked him whether he might reconsider portions of his book. Do you want, I asked him, to be explained away years from now like Ezra Pound? Ed wrote back and said that, of course, he would rethink the offending passages. Then, over the next few weeks, little white index cards began to appear in my mailbox, scrawled in blue ink in his crabbed hand, keyed to pages in the manuscript, announcing that he would keep this joke or that, that he would say whatever he wanted to about minorities "devoted to drugs, crime, spray paint, ward-heeling politics, cars and the monthly welfare check"—and to hell with what the East Coast liberal elite might say about him.

I was thus enlisted in the elite corps on the opposite coast, regardless of my own politics, for a while at least. Ed's anger

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diminished, but, in the end, he kept his jokes, every last one of them. And I kept, and keep, my conviction that the book would have been better without them, less because of political sensitivities than because most of them were not funny.

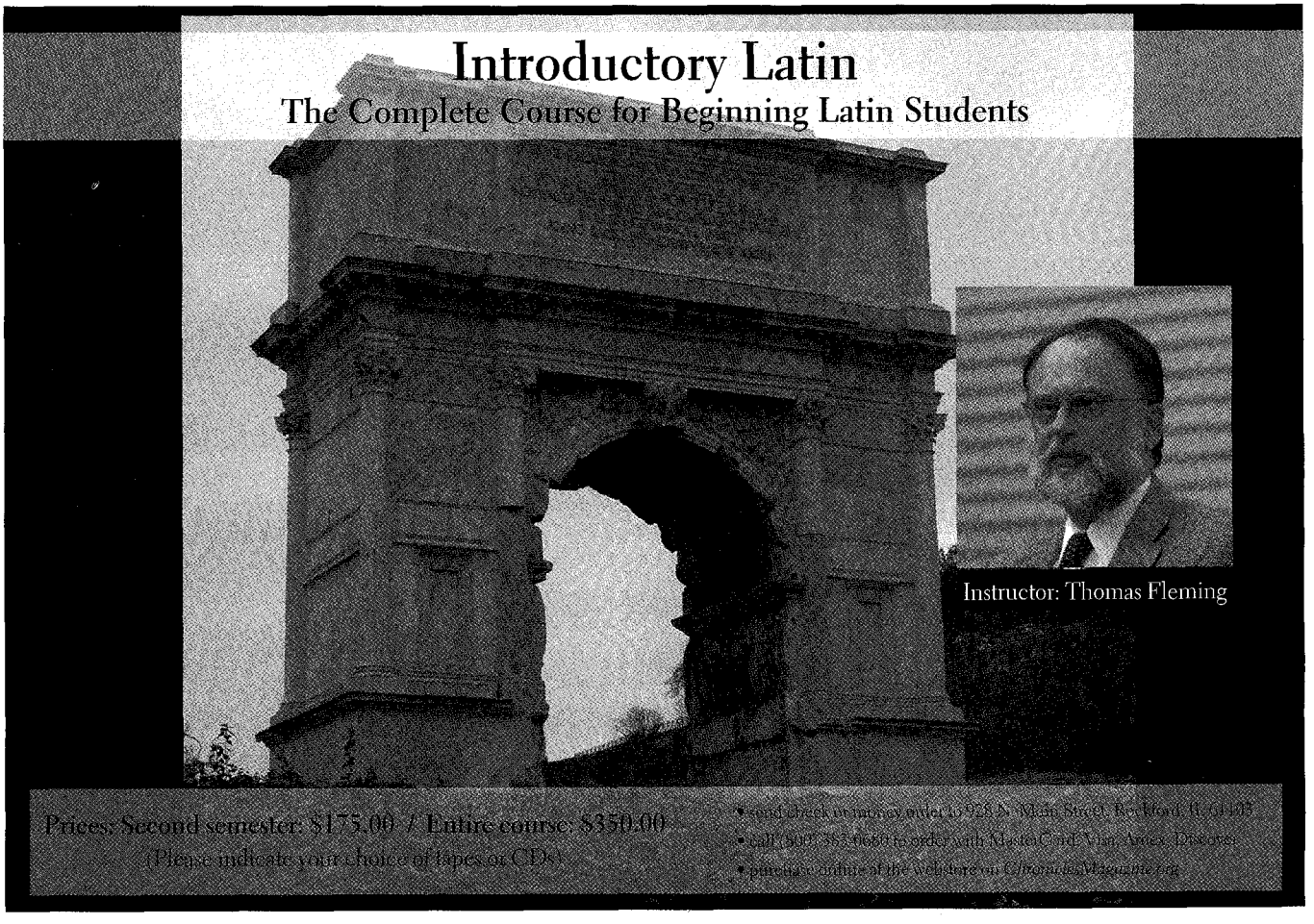
Was Abbey a racist? Undoubtedly, at least after a fashion. Very few of his generation escaped being hit by that broad brush. Was he a paragon of virtue? No, and he never offered himself up as a model for emulation: He had his demons and his paradoxes, this man who despised cattle ranching but loved hamburgers, who railed against environmental despoliation but drove a gigantic Cadillac convertible, who preached devotion and loyalty to causes but had trouble remaining faithful to his wives, who scorned liberalism but contributed to the ACLU. He called himself a theoretical anarchist and a practical democrat, but Ed never bothered himself with developing a coherent politics apart from that most old-school of tenets: The individual trumps the collectivity, the collectivity is always suspect, freedom is the *sine qua non* of existence, the world is a fine place and worth fighting for. In all this, Ed was a kind of John Wayne, resolute and unwavering, but almost always smiling. Perhaps better put, he was political kin to another conservative and Arizonan, Barry Goldwater, who was perfectly consistent in his views and disinclined to compromise them, a far cry from the sort of glad-handism that wins elections these days.

The libraries of the world are full of little-visited books by grouches and complainers. Why do we continue to read Abbey? Well, for one thing, because, when he was on his game, he wrote truly and beautifully: There are few modern novels as heartfelt as *Black Sun*, no book about the Western landscape more evocative than *Desert Solitaire*. We continue to read him because no one else has so well captured the essential freedom and beauty of the West, and of America generally. We read him because he remained true to what he believed: for wilderness, for open space, for a world outside the city, for the individual.

The last time I saw Ed, we walked by a construction site on the way to a nearby burger joint. He pulled up a survey stake and tossed it out onto the road. "Earth First!" he grinned. A week or two later, he called to suggest that we have another meal. The night before we were to meet, a member of my family suffered a heart attack, and I called from the hospital to ask for a rain check. Sure, he said. A couple of days later, he died, his innards finally having given out after too many years of too much abuse. I now think that Ed knew he was about to leave the planet, and that he had wanted to say goodbye to an old friend who so often disagreed with him.

Ed now lies under 30-odd tons of volcanic scree under a cactus-studded escarpment somewhere in the desert of western Arizona, a battleground in the current war against illegal immigration. I think of him often, especially when I drive through cities such as Tucson and Phoenix and Los Angeles, grim hives that are busily chewing up the desert surrounding them, growing cancerously at the rate of an acre per hour, showing no signs of civilization and plenty of inclination toward the individual-crushing mind-set of the collectivity. The West Abbey loved is under assault every day. Much of it is gone, and things are getting worse.

But still, reading Abbey's books, we take hope. And I suspect that, when the coyotes finally dig down to his bones thousands of years from now, the old controversialist and scrappy conservative will have had the last word. ◁©▷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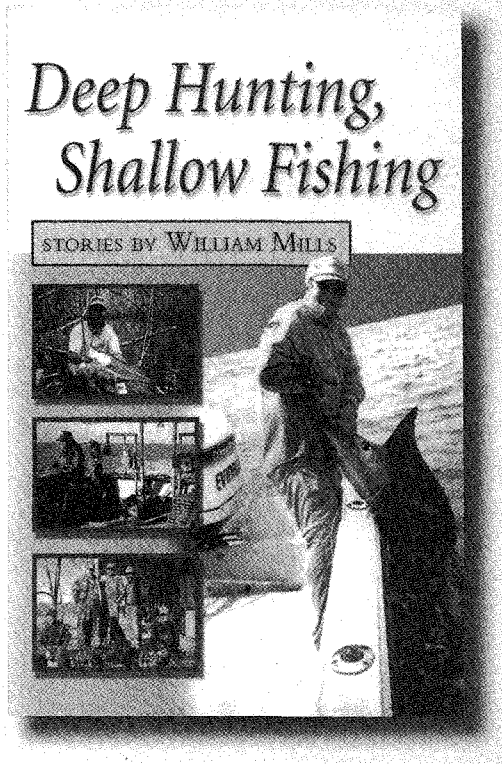

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Reflections on Immigration Reform

The Battle for America's Communities

by David A. Hartman

The most significant event of President George W. Bush's second term (thus far) has been the defeat of the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007 (S.1348). This bill was initiated by President Bush in collaboration with the Democratic congressional majority, over the opposition of the Republicans and a few rebellious Democrats. The real winners of this battle were the usually silent majority of conservative Americans who rose to protest the next wave of illegal-alien invasion, which would have followed the amnesty proposed by S.1348. The subsequent resignation of Bush's senior Machiavellian, Karl Rove, was not surprising.

It is difficult to know if conservatives were primarily concerned with the sheer magnitude of immigrants or with the threat of terrorism. Both problems would have been exacerbated by the S.1348 amnesty, which could have resulted in as many as 100 million more immigrants, as estimated by Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation. After being double-crossed by the immigration acts of 1965, 1986, and 1996, our dissident conservatives seem to be saying, "What's wrong with taking control of our borders by enforcing the laws we already have?"

Among its key proposals, S.1348 offered a virtual fence to monitor our Southern border, presumably as a replacement for the physical fence ordered by both houses last year, which remains unconstructed. It also proposed the use of biometric IDs in visa-entry, monitoring, and exit procedures, which would be administered by the Department of Homeland Security. Of course, the most important way to reduce the chief incentive for illegal immigration—restricting employment to legally approved aliens—is already provided for by present law. That law simply is not enforced with reasonable policing, a conclusion that is supported by the fact that there were only 718 employer arrests in 2006, despite estimates that more than half of the 13 million illegal aliens here are employed. The amnesty of 1996 only served to swell the flood of illegal aliens and increased pressure for additional legal immigration of relatives (who account for 83 percent of those naturalized every year). These figures validate conservative concerns about the prospects of yet another (and greater) flood tide.

In Washington, the political pressure for increases in immigration allowances is, first and foremost, a matter of supply and demand for cheap labor (both salaried and hourly). As of 2003, foreign-born workers made up one sixth of the U.S. civilian workforce. Since the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, according to U.S. Department of Labor statistics, real compensation per unit of output (including fringe benefits) for workers in the private sector declined by one quarter, while real paycheck earnings per unit of output declined by one half. Before 1965, however, earnings and compensation per unit of output were relatively stable, so it is not difficult to conclude that immigration has had a negative effect on returns to labor. Admittedly, in the medical and high-tech fields, immigration has helped relieve inflationary shortages. In general, however, the massive flow of migrants has depressed middle-class wages. In addition, immigration enables employers to risk less capital in exchange for more return. Yes, as the mantra goes, the immigrants "are doing the jobs Americans won't do"—but that is because *Americans want reasonable living wages.* The historically low U.S. unemployment rate (4.5 percent), which is regularly cited as proof that the current demand for labor is unsatisfied, does not reflect declines in both female and male workforce participation: 17 percent of American males, ages 16 to 26, refuse to take jobs that pay less than babysitting, but, when combined with welfare benefits, those jobs look good to unskilled immigrants. American workers—who, since Colonial times, were among the highest-paid laborers in the world—are being marginalized by the globalists' manipulation of immigration and trade.

Why shouldn't Americans at least take advantage of the bargain-priced services offered by unskilled aliens? The answer is simple: The immigrants and their employers may be better off for getting the business, but only at the expense of the average working and tax-paying citizen. The low-income aliens pay little or no income or FICA taxes, either by taking advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit or by avoiding paying taxes altogether. On average, these aliens have double the poverty rate and criminality of the rest of the population, and they secure substantial welfare benefits from both legal and illegal sources, including free medical care and education, paid for by U.S. taxpayers. Eventually, many of them become citizens and then qualify for Social Security and Medicare at a total net cost to taxpayers of over $150,000 per family (after comparing taxes paid to benefits accrued or received).

The fury of the grassroots at the soaring numbers of illegal aliens is warranted, but somewhat misdirected. After all, it is hard to blame aliens when they walk through an open door and help themselves to a better standard of living—and when it is obvious to them that the immigration police could not care less. The traffickers who locate and deliver them, those who employ them illicitly, and the border patrol and the federal overseers who do not enforce the law are at least as guilty as the aliens—perhaps more so.

Of equal or greater importance is the loss of the successful American way of life. For decades, conservatives have warned that excessive immigration would result in the loss of traditional communities, on which American success has been built; now these predictions are becoming realities. Michael Barone, in an op-ed published in the *Wall Street Journal* ("The Realignment of America"), shows that masses of native-born Americans

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are migrating from the East and West Coast cities to the cities of the Heartland. The population loss on both coasts is being driven and replaced by immigrants. It would appear that the prospects for the "pursuit of happiness" by native-born Americans—who have seen their former communities increasingly overrun by immigrant strangers—have deteriorated to such an extent that it warranted seeking new communities where they could live among other native-born Americans. In another *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, Daniel Henninger records the findings of Prof. Robert Putnam of Harvard University, who studied the effects of "diversity" by conducting 30,000 interviews in 41 U.S. communities: "Short version: People in ethnically diverse settings don't want to have much of anything to do with each other. 'Social capital' erodes. Diversity has a downside." Putnam's composite findings are perturbing:

> Inhabitants of diverse communities tend to withdraw from collective life, to distrust their neighbors, regardless of the color of their skin, to withdraw even from close friends, to expect the worst from their community and its leaders, to volunteer less, give less to charity and work on community projects less often, to register to vote less, to agitate for social reform more, but have less faith that they can actually make a difference, and to huddle unhappily in front of the television.

It appears that the vaunted "diversity" provided by increased immigration has proved no friend either to American communities or to America's middle class, which has been the pride of our republic since its founding. Low-wage illegal-alien workers and their welfare subsidies are really subsidies to their U.S. employers—subsidies that drive up profits while depressing middle-class earnings.

The Christian churches of America, particularly the traditional denominations, represent the potential swing vote of the electorate, which could restore limited immigration. The leaders of these denominations have been purveyors of socialism and globalism for over a century. As a result, their congregations have been brainwashed into believing that taking in the world's poor through an open-borders policy is the requirement of a good Samaritan. But consider the sobering picture painted by Peter Brimelow, in his comprehensive overview of immigration, *Alien Nation*: The Census Bureau predicts that, by 2050, the U.S. population will be 392 million; Leon Bouvier of Tulane University estimates that 139 million of them will be post-1970 immigrants and their descendants; and, David A. Coleman of Oxford University estimates that, currently, 60 million people wish to emigrate from the Third World to the United States. Should each of them be followed by seven relatives, as is the present trend, the result of our *de facto* open-borders policy could be an influx of as many as 480 million new arrivals—quite a burden for America's good Samaritans. At some point, these good Samaritans will have to wake up to the fact that open borders mean putting their incomes, standards of living, culture, governance, and even law and order at risk. No country has ever survived when its citizens have given charity to mankind priority over the wellbeing of their families, friends, and neighbors.

Realistically, the 13 million illegal aliens who are currently residing in the United States cannot be abruptly returned to their native countries *en masse*. Their status should be resolved by our adoption of the temporary legal categories of alien-labor quotas proposed in S.1348, in agriculture, high-tech, and services, but not on the terms proposed by S.1348—that is, not by amnesty. Present illegal employees who "surrender" should be allowed to apply for these temporary jobs. Their employment should be contracted on an annual basis, and, after each year, they should be required to return home. Temporary residency should be monitored by biometric IDs. Alien workers' wages and their numbers should be regulated to prevent any further depression of domestic compensation levels. Aliens without criminal records (other than border violations) who are granted temporary employment should be allowed to apply for naturalization, but with no promises and with no priority placed on their applications. Naturalization should require not only proficiency in English, civics, and history but a high-school degree or the completion of a GED taken in English. The Constitution should be amended so that citizenship is not automatically extended to those born to noncitizens in the United States, and so that English is established as the national language. As employers of illegal aliens are identified when their illegal employees surrender, they should be convicted and fined or incarcerated, as required by law. Hereafter, no illegal alien should be allowed employment in the United States or given any other basis for staying.

The most important way to reduce the chief incentive for illegal immigration—restricting employment to legally approved aliens—is already provided for by present law. That law simply is not enforced with reasonable policing.

The Democratic and Republican parties have been content to use the immigration invasion to their political benefit, providing empty rhetoric to their respective bases, without regard for the tragic consequences for America and Americans. The Bush Republican machine has pandered to Central Americans and Mexicans, the principal source of illegal immigrants, with offers of bilingual education and citizenship, an approach that promises to turn the American Southwest into Kosovo. After all, President Felipe Calderón of Mexico has all but endorsed a *reconquista* by declaring that "Mexico does not end at its borders." Meanwhile, the Democrats have worked toward a broad expansion of Third World immigration, in order to increase their voting base and thereby displace the Bush Republican regime. The rebellion of congressional Republicans in response to the demands of their core electorate could signal a movement toward sound immigration reform that would protect American communities and workers. Such a movement might even be joined by Democratic rebels intent on returning their party to its populist roots. Unfortunately, it is more likely that both parties, financed by corporate and Wall Street greed, will continue to profit from excessive immigration, making a mockery of the American experiment and its once optimistic prospects—both for Americans and, by example, for the rest of the world. ◁

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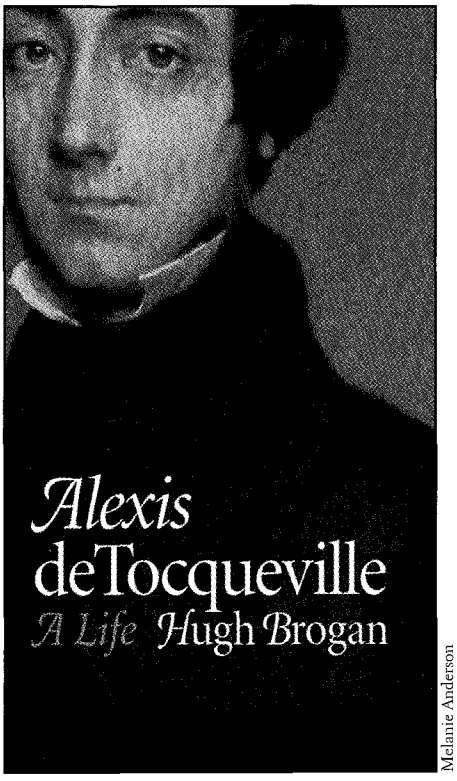
A Democrat of the Head

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

"A perfect democracy is the most shameless thing in the world."
—Edmund Burke

Alexis de Tocqueville: A Life
by Hugh Brogan
New Haven: Yale University Press;
724 pp., $35.00



Melanie Anderson

Hugh Brogan has lived a long time—since the late 50's, when he was reading history at St. John's College, Cambridge—with the subject of this biography. Across the decades, though his affection for Alexis de Tocqueville has not lessened, his skepticism in regard to the man's social and political understanding appears to have increased. Brogan consistently deplores (over 700 pages) what he considers Tocqueville's snobbery, his expressed fears of democracy's susceptibility to tyranny by the majority, his preference for the notables over the commonality of Frenchmen in his day and for constitutional monarchy over socialism, his supposed "obsession with property"—in short, his unwillingness to go for the radical-liberal agenda whole hog, which strikes Hugh Brogan as reactionary. And yet, to my mind, it doesn't matter; Brogan's strictures may be irritating, but they cannot and do not spoil a splendid work, which amounts to a model of the biographer's art. They have at least the virtue of being honest and forthright, where another man, working indirectly by insinuation and innuendo, might have warped the whole project through fake objectivity. Brogan is free to disagree with Tocqueville and be done with it. The same goes even for Brogan's frankly expressed anti-Catholicism, as when he professes amazement that Tocqueville's "shedding of obsolete mental baggage," his Faith, should have caused him not relief but deep distress. For the rest, Brogan's portrait of the great Frenchman, and of *La France* in one of the most brilliant (as he rightly says) periods of its history, cannot be bested. Moreover, Hugh Brogan writes marvelously. Tocqueville expressed the belief that a Briton surpassed a representative of any other nationality in his ability to express himself, both in thought and in writing, in his native language. As a British author himself, Hugh Brogan makes no liar of Alexis de Tocqueville.

Had Tocqueville become a social democrat, let alone a socialist, it would have been contrary entirely to his nature and to his upbringing. One might as well expect a lion to grow into a vegetarian, or a Samburu into an Englishman. As it was, Tocqueville—as Brogan concedes—departed from family tradition in his religion (he lost his Catholic faith in his youth and did not receive Communion again until he was on his deathbed), in his marriage (marrying an English Protestant of middle-class origins), and in his politics (by refusing to hew to legitimist principles). Tocqueville was never a hidebound aristocrat, but an *aristo* he was born, and an *aristo* he remained to the end of his life, both in instinct and in preference. "When I talk to a *gentilhomme*," he once remarked,

> though we have not two ideas in common, though all his opinions, wishes, and thoughts are opposed to mine, yet I feel at once that we belong to the same family, that we speak the same language, that we understand one another. I may like a *bourgeois* better, but he is a stranger.

So far from casting discredit on the man, the sentiment actually does Tocqueville credit. Had he felt otherwise, he would have been, like so many of his pro-republican contemporaries, an ideologue rather than a liberal-minded man, a savant of understanding—indeed, of prophetic genius. For Tocqueville, a republican world would be a changed but familiar world replete with familiar things, institutions, people, and relationships—not an unrecognizable and unprecedented utopia created by turning the *Ancien Régime* upside down and inside out.

Tocqueville was descended on both sides from aristocratic families. The Clérels (later the Tocquevilles) were an old Norman family, ennobled since 1425 or even earlier, whose manor house is situated in the Contentin not many miles east of Cherbourg. Alexis's grandfather Bernard, the second comte de Tocqueville, by dint of a good marriage into the Damas family, was able to make

Chilton Williamson, Jr., is Chronicles' *senior editor for books.*

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the house over into a chateau. Hervé, Tocqueville's father, married Louise de Rosanbo, granddaughter of Chrétien-Guillaume Lamoignon des Malesherbes, a scion of one of the greatest families of the *noblesse de robe* and reform-minded minister under Louis XVI who later offered his services to the monarch as the king's chief counsel during his trial at the hands of the Convention and was eventually himself executed, along with numerous members of his family. Hervé and Louise were imprisoned in Port-Libre for ten months before being released following the execution of Robespierre. Alexis's earliest memory seems to have been of an incident that occurred when he was only three years old, when the Tocquevilles and their near relations—the Rosanbos and Chateaubriands—gathered about the fire to sing a royalist song commemorating the sufferings and death of Louis XVI. According to Brogan, it was not until, as a young man, Tocqueville read Adolphe Thiers' *Histoire de la Révolution* that he began to understand the French Revolution as something more than the work of the Freemasons or the duc d'Orléans. Brogan credits a lecture series delivered by François Guizot in Paris in the months before the July Revolution with drawing Tocqueville's attention to the fact that a process of democratization had been in train for centuries, thus leading him in time to conclude that, in democracy, the inevitable future lay. Early in April the following year, he and his friend Gustave de Beaumont, whom he had met at the start of his legal apprenticeship at the parquet at Versailles, sailed from Le Havre for New York, on leave from their duties to study and produce a report on prison reform in the United States.

It is too much to say that Tocqueville arrived in America prepared, or even predisposed, to admire her democratic system of government. Brogan speculates that he was greatly encouraged in his attitudes—even in his decision to travel to the States—by his uncle, François-René de Chateaubriand, the celebrated author of *Les Natchez* and *Voyage en Amérique* as well as of the more famous *Atala*, who, in his youth, early on in the Revolution, had sailed to North America, where he was able temporarily to evade the contradiction between his liberal politics and his loyalty to the France of his ancestors. Tocqueville, who had taken the oath to support the new monarch, Louis-Philippe (thus renouncing his allegiance to the Bourbons), may, Brogan quite plausibly suggests, have been following consciously in his relative's footsteps; indeed, he allows that "readers of the *Démocratie* today may well see in Chateaubriand's brief musings [in the *Voyage*] the germ of Tocqueville's masterpiece." However that may be, Tocqueville, by the time he and Beaumont departed New York City, had his theme:

> We are travelling towards unlimited democracy. I don't say that this is a good thing. What I see in this country convinces me, on the contrary, that it won't suit France; but we are driven by an irresistible force. No effort made to stop this movement will do more than bring about brief halts.

Tocqueville was always at pains to remind that he was indeed, as the title of his book makes clear, writing a work about American democracy, not democracy as a generalized system of government and society. (Rather surprisingly, he draws few if any comparisons between democracy in America and the democratic and republican states of ancient Greece and Rome.) He was too good an historian, a sociologist, and a political scientist for that. Rather, he learned early in his stay in the United States the enormous importance of her *point de départ*, that is, her formative particularities and circumstances. The formal statement of this understanding occurs in Volume One, Part II, Chapter 9 of *Democracy in America*, entitled "The Main Causes Tending to Maintain a Democratic Republic in the United States." Tocqueville groups these causes in three categories: America's geographical isolation and the size and natural abundance of the North American continent; American laws; and American mores and habits (*moeurs*). In accounting for the success to date of democratic institutions in America, he emphasized in particular the fact of the American people's ethnic homogeneity and that of the colonists' having been the product of a high civilization, "completely civilized" upon their arrival in the New World, with "no need to learn, it being enough that they should not forget." Similarly, the principle of *point de départ* prevented Tocqueville from imagining that democracy, however modified or adapted to a particular nation, would ever spread beyond "Christendom"; for him, the genius of democracy was the product of Western institutions.

Hugh Brogan does not find fault with what he may or may not consider an expression of narrow-mindedness. However, he dissents strongly from Tocqueville's reservations (as expressed especially in Volume II of *Democracy in America*) concerning the future of democratic institutions and society in the United States—and, by extension, every nation to commit its future to the democratic dream, including France, where Tocqueville, after 1848, regarded his native country's progress away from constitutional monarchy, and later republicanism, on its approach toward democratic socialism with an increasingly jaundiced eye.

Tocqueville has much to say in *Democracy in America* about the omnipotence of the majority and, finally, the "tyranny of the majority" in the United States. Brogan charges that he slides from the first to the second, and then treats the latter as if it were an accomplished fact—which Brogan thinks absurd of him. To account for the antidemocratic element in the book, he advances an "hypothesis," explaining that its author had in mind while composing it his legitimist friends, and other readers, who would find such caveats agreeable to their prejudices. "By taking them seriously he could hope that his radical new views would be taken seriously too." But Brogan admits that, after returning from America, Tocqueville himself "relapsed into a sort of legitimism." Moreover, he all too uncritically rejects Tocqueville's less favorable descriptions of Life in These United States in the Age of Jackson. Here, by way of a single example, is Tocqueville on intellectual conformity in America:

> [T]he majority has enclosed thought within a formidable fence. A writer is free inside that area, but woe to the man who goes beyond it. Not that he stands in fear of an *auto-da-fé*, but he must face all kinds of unpleasantness and everyday persecution. A career in politics is closed to him, for he has offended the only power that holds the keys. He is denied everything, including renown. Before he goes into print, he believes he has supporters; but he feels he has them no more once he stands revealed to all, for those who condemn him express their own views loudly, while those who think as he does, but without his courage, retreat in-

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to silence as if ashamed of having told the truth.

Whether that is an accurate representation of the state of affairs in America in 1831, it is certainly spot-on in respect of the America of 2007, a fact to which Brogan (who has written a biography of John F. Kennedy and obviously admires America for her liberal aspect and traditions) seems oblivious. Possibly, Alexis de Tocqueville was a better prophet than he was a journalistic observer.

A dozen pages on, discussing the Introduction to the *Démocratie* of 1835, Brogan summarizes its argument and discerns its intention:

> The Christian world is condemned to democracy, it is God's will; the task must be to secure its benefits rather than to succumb to its evils, and Tocqueville's book is designed to show how. While never in so many words admitting that part of the work of the French Revolution had been to create a new governing class, the notables, to which he himself belonged, he is firm in asserting that the educated classes must seize control of the democratic movement and direct it according to their superior knowledge and understanding, for otherwise the violent and ignorant lower orders will destroy society.

This is no more than to say that Tocqueville's sympathies were with the Federalists, that he viewed American democracy precisely as the Founding Fathers did, while Brogan's are with the Jacksonian Democrats, who reprobated Federalism. That is too bad for Brogan, whose subject is, in this respect as in many others, a disappointment to him. He concludes:

> The Introduction, then, summarizes or implies Tocqueville's political creed as well as his historical vision, and shows clearly what he hoped to achieve by his book. He wanted to launch a new kind of liberalism and help to steer it. He was claiming a place not just among France's authors but in her governing elite. The rest of his life would be the story of how his ambition fared.

That story is, indeed, a mixed one. Elected in 1839 from Valognes (Department of the Manche) to the Chamber of Deputies, Tocqueville sat there until 1851, while serving also as general counselor of the Manche in 1842 and the president of that department's *conseil general* from 1849 to 1851. In the Revolution of February 1848, he was elected to the Constituent Assembly and, as an advocate of universal suffrage, had a part in drafting the constitution of the Second Republic as a means of bringing the conservative countryside to bear against the Paris revolutionists. Under the Second Republic, he supported the *parti de l'Ordre* against the socialists and workers, and supported General Cavaignac's repression of the June Days revolt. He served briefly as foreign minister in Odilon Barrot's government and departed political life after Louis Napoléon's coup in 1851 as a supporter of the Bourbon Restoration. Brogan argues that Tocqueville would have had greater success as a politician had he been capable of accepting the exigencies of party politics, which he abhorred and refused to countenance. *Souvenirs*, Brogan's favorite among Tocqueville's *oeuvres*, is a notable fruit of its author's political career. For the rest, Brogan is dismayed by the political record. "'There have been wickeder revolutionaries than those of 1848,' said Tocqueville, 'but I do not think that there have ever been any who were stupider.' He would have done well to include himself in this condemnation." Brogan charges that Tocqueville expressed no sympathy for the distressed workers in 1848 and condemns his "obsession with private property."

> It is perhaps unfair to point out that ever since Bismarck set out to kill socialism with kindness governments have been interfering in just the same ways that Tocqueville dreaded, and many more besides, yet civilization continues.

That, of course, is a debatable assessment, and I have little doubt as to which side of the debate the man who wrote these words (in 1841) would choose today:

> I like democratic institutions with my head, but I am aristocratic by instinct, that is to say I despise and fear the mob. I passionately love liberty, legality, respect for rights, but not democracy. . . . Liberty is the first of my passions. There is the truth.

Hugh Brogan is as entitled to his politi-

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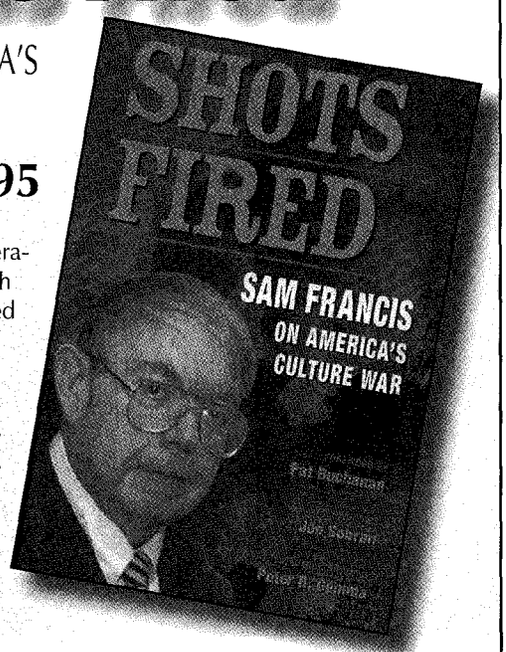

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cal opinions as Tocqueville, but it seems not to have occurred to him that a biography is no place for the biographer overtly to vent his political (or any other) disagreements with his subject, these being entirely irrelevant to the work at hand. It is almost exactly like a novelist stepping outside the narrative voice to take explicit issue with the ideas and attitudes of his protagonist. Why so good a writer as Hugh Brogan should have succumbed to the temptation to commit such an error is difficult to explain. Could he have done so from sheer frustration, the sense either that his understanding of Alexis de Tocqueville does not penetrate quite far enough, or that, at bottom, he does not wish to understand him, and with him his ideas about what is, after all, a very tender subject, no less in this day and age than in Tocqueville's?

Democracy, for Mr. Brogan, appears to be a faith; for Tocqueville, it was simply a phenomenon.

"Liberty is the first of my passions. There is the truth." Brogan protests that, by "liberty," Tocqueville meant the kind of liberty that men such as himself, a French notable, can appreciate and make use of. Yet that is the only sort of liberty worth having; in fact, it is the only kind of liberty worthy of the term. Tocqueville saw, after 1848, the French republic becoming a means rather than an end, as Brogan notes, and he wanted none of it. Brogan complains that Tocqueville never overcame his prejudices as an aristocrat, a man of property, and a cradle Catholic. Every man, of course, has his prejudices, and Tocqueville's were better than those of most others, belonging as they did to a consummately civilized European. But there is more to his wariness toward democracy than prejudice, or so it seems to me.

Tocqueville, as I have noted, believed democracy to be the inevitable future for Christendom (the West), as Lincoln Steffens later thought communism was. Yet he appears also to have suspected that the future was too good to be true—in other words, that such a future would not, and could not, be a lasting one. Like Benjamin Franklin, Tocqueville beheld in America "a republic, if you can keep it," but not in America alone. With classical insight, he understood, more clearly than most observers of his time and since, democracy's self-destructive tendencies stemming from its dual nature. "On the one hand" he wrote,

> democracy's project is unrealizable, because it is contrary to nature. On the other, it is impossible to stop short of this democracy and go back to aristocracy. This is because democratic equality also conforms to nature. . . . To affirm and will democracy insofar as it is in conformity with nature, to limit it in so far as it is contrary to it, such is the sovereign art on which depend the prosperity and morality of democracies.

Today, Alexis de Tocqueville can be seen as the prophet of the age of democracy—and also of its successor, the post-democratic age, the signs of which are plain to see around the globe, from Asia to the Near East to Russia to Western Europe to the United States of America, Tocqueville's guarded hope for the future and, until near the end of the 20th century, a City on a Hill and a beacon (however naively perceived) for the entire world. For a time, democracy was indeed the future, but that future is now past. Tocqueville would assuredly have been disappointed, but he would scarcely have been surprised. His latest biographer, by contrast, seems blithely unaware that history has moved on into the era After Tocqueville.

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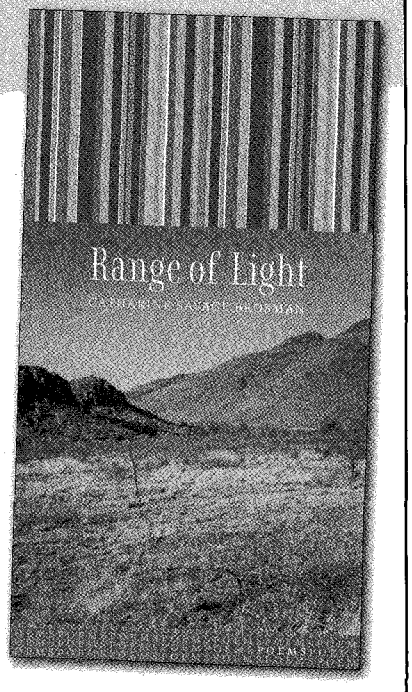

Range of Light

Poems

CATHARINE SAVAGE BROSMAN

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An Image of the East

by Daniel Larison

Sailing From Byzantium: How a Lost Empire Shaped the World
by Colin Wells
New York: Delacorte Press;
368 pp., $14.00

◆

It is a cliché among Byzantinists that too few people in the world, especially in the West, know anything about Byzantium, so there is no doubt that more works of "popular synthesis" that make this Christian successor to the Roman Empire in the East accessible to a broader audience are greatly needed. Colin Wells sets out to provide one with *Sailing From Byzantium*, his overview of the rich legacy of Byzantium to the Latin West and the Islamic and Slavic worlds. Wells has studied with the great Byzantinist Speros Vryonis and has a more or less solid grasp of the sweep of Byzantine history. As a general introduction to the Byzantine inheritance that might inspire the general reader to learn more, Wells' book is mostly acceptable, but, on a number of important topics, his explanations and descriptions are not always reliable or entirely accurate. Most importantly, on vitally significant religious questions, Wells shows that he is not interested in taking the sages of Byzantium standing in God's holy light as the "singing-masters" of his soul. This alienation from the Byzantine religious imagination that interwove rational discourse, rhetoric, and spirituality severely undermines some of his statements about the nature of the phenomena he is describing.

Wells has divided the book into three sections, one for each neighboring "civilization" Byzantium influenced: the West, the Islamic world, and the Slavs. He does best when he discusses the intricacies of Byzantine-Latin intellectual connections in the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries in the first part, as he traces the personal and scholarly links between such figures as the 14th-century anti-Hesychast Barlaam and Petrarch, or between Manuel Chrysoloras and the numerous Florentine humanists who began learning their Greek from him, or between the reformist friar Savonarola and Maxim the Greek. Those familiar with the general outlines of Renaissance Italy and Western Europe's debt to Byzantine exiles for reintroducing the Greek language to the West will appreciate this section, though, admittedly, it is the best-known part of the story of Byzantium's legacy.

Wells does what he can in the section on the Islamic world, correctly noting the role of Syrian Christian scholars in introducing their Muslim rulers to Greek science and mathematics. He also tells the familiar story of the conflicts between Islam and philosophy. One such conflict occurred in the ninth century, when the Muslim rationalism of the Muta'zila briefly peaked and then suffered obliteration at the hands of the adherents of the far more widespread and common form of Islam, to which the Muta'zila had always been an elite and scholarly exception. However, Wells inaccurately equates the significantly different mysticism of the Muslim theologian Ghazali with that of the later Byzantine theologian and saint Gregory Palamas (d. 1359), quite falsely claiming that Palamas "rejected the idea that reason can say anything meaningful about God at all," when the core of what is sometimes called Palamism is the belief that rational demonstration in theology is possible precisely because God has revealed Himself to men through His energies. In his overbearing enthusiasm for "humanists" and rationalism, Wells has managed to impute to Gregory Palamas the extreme apophatic view about God that his opponent Barlaam held (*i.e.*, that God is utterly unknowable). When Wells holds up this same Barlaam as an important "rationalist" and an early conduit of Byzantine learning to Italy, it is all the more damaging to his account of the Hesychast controversy (1338-51) discussed below. Barlaam was such a conduit, but that does not give any reason for the simplistic divisions between antirational monks and rationalist "humanists" in Byzantium that Wells makes partly on account of Barlaam's association with the early Italian humanists.

As this example shows, Wells fumbles most often when he attempts to describe or interpret specifically religious and doctrinal matters that arose over the course of the empire's history. Elsewhere, he repeats a standard but largely rejected canard that non-Chalcedonians (*i.e.*, monophysites) "often" welcomed the Islamic invaders in the seventh century as "liberators," when there is no evidence of this and, in fact, important evidence to the contrary. (For example, the seventh-century Coptic bishop and chronicler John of Nikiu denounced the Chalcedonians for bringing ruin upon the Roman empire that non-Chalcedonians regarded as theirs and viewed the coming of Islam with dismay.) In another place, Wells simply errs in his descriptions of major heresies when he says that Nestorianism emphasized the humanity, and monophysitism, the divinity, of Christ, when the crucial difference among all Christological doctrines of the period was the nature of the relationship between two complete natures. (More cringe-inducing is Wells' off-hand comparison of Nestorianism and Arianism, when the two have essentially nothing in common and Nestorius himself was vehemently anti-Arian.) Elsewhere, he alludes to the "monochrome, iconless Constantinople" of the iconoclastic period, evidently unaware that iconoclasts were not strictly devoted to aniconism and continued to accept symbolic, animal, and vegetal art in churches. (Figural images—especially of Christ—and the veneration of such images were offensive to the iconoclasts, not church art *per se*. Unfortunately, these are common enough mistakes in such cursory explanations of Byzantine religion, but they are all the more unsatisfactory in a popular work where the intended audience can be expected to know little about the topic.

Most vexed and troubling is his treatment of Hesychasm in the first and third parts. Built on the ancient monastic spiritual practice of constant prayer, Hesychasm is the cultivation of stillness (*hesychia*), and commonly refers to the mystical theology associated with the spiritual experience and knowledge of the Hesychasts. The word also refers to the doctrines most closely associated with St. Gregory Palamas that concern the distinction between the energies and essence of God and the emphasis on the uncreated nature of God's light as perceived at the Transfiguration of Christ and in the experiences of the saints. Wells' treatment of Hesychasm forms a dominant theme throughout the book and constitutes a major part of his explanation of the introduction of Byzantine "humanism" into Italy and Byzantine spirituality into the Slavic world. While Wells does recognize the significance of the phenomenon, his interpretation of Hesychasm itself will leave many Palaeologan-era scholars and Orthodox theologians baffled and frustrated. By way of emphasizing how important Hesychasm was as

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an "engine" of the intellectual ferment of the second Byzantine "renaissance," Wells restates the untenably stark opposition between rationalistic humanists and obscurantist monks that has so plagued most studies of Hesychasm, in particular, and Byzantine religion, in general.

Insofar as *Sailing From Byzantium* seeks to make Byzantium appear relevant and interesting to a wider audience by showing the debt that at least three civilizations owe to the Byzantines, it is a commendable effort. At the same time, it relates Byzantium to the audience in terms of its afterlife, the survival of its influence in later centuries, which tends to reinforce conventional views of Byzantium as the bridge back to Greek antiquity, as the means of transmission of the classical heritage to the early modern world, or as the conveyor of Christianity to the Slavs. While these things are all part of the story, Byzantium was more than this: a civilization in its own right that should be able to capture the popular imagination without being made immediately relevant to the audience. To the extent that Wells' volume repeats the stereotypes that work to reduce Byzantium to a medium or transmitter, it makes the Byzantines appear to be the rather ossified and artificial civilization that their detractors have made them out to be, rather than the dynamic, adaptive, and creative people that they were.

Daniel Larison writes from Chicago.

Southwest Illuminations

by Mary Anne O'Neil

Range of Light
by Catharine Savage Brosman
Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press; 62 pp., $17.95

◆

Range of Light, Catharine Savage Brosman's sixth full-length collection of poetry, returns to the Southwest landscapes of the poet's youth. It is impressive that Brosman has retained such a strong connection to her native region after an adulthood spent in New Orleans and a long career as teacher and scholar of French literature at Tulane University. Brosman's verse is a rare example of good creative writing by an academic. The language of *Range of Light* is concrete yet musical, free of pedantry or critical jargon. This collection will appeal to readers who love poetry on nature and appreciate the unabashed sentiments of an artist who does also.

These 45 short poems can be read as the travelogue of a road trip that begins in Colorado and stops at all of the major national parks and towns of historical significance in the mountain states, eventually venturing into eastern California. Brosman emphasizes the unique physical features of each spot, describing them in precise geological terms and often explaining the geological history of rock and sand formations. Her explanations always move beyond the objective description of natural forces and invite the reader to find in these landscapes proof of the eternal power of nature as well as the harmony and power that infuse it. She sees the mud pots of Yellowstone as

> . . . fantastic, as they flow,
> with ferrous residue creating rings
> and mineral wounds that bleed
> against the snow.

It is enough for her to look at the moraines along the Snake River to understand that these rocks guarantee the reality of the Ice Age. Faithful guardians of the earth's memory, "their heart is frozen as the glaciers / that reformed their rougher truth." She readily makes very effective comparisons between sand and water. Deserts recall oceans in their color and movement, as in her description of Arizona's Painted Desert, a coastline formed of sand but which now restrains a sandy sea:

> . . . Just ahead begin the Painted
> Cliffs,
> rippling in rose and sunset and vermilion,
> breaking the way the surf gives out,
> then recommencing from the desert swell.

Brosman consciously sets herself apart from the American poetic tradition, most notably represented by William Carlos Williams, that finds truth in an intense perception of objects that never dares interpretation. Brosman's descriptions are exactly the opposite. She is personally involved with everything she sees, and her guidance renders this sight meaningful for the reader.

The Rocky Mountains reign over all these landscapes like a god. A vision of mountains frequently concludes a poem, as in the opening piece, "In the Abajo Mountains," where the poet and her companions pour a libation of wine to the peaks that surround them. The mountain is often a slippery deity, only revealing its truth to the poet after a prolonged physical struggle. My favorite poem of the collection, "Enos Mills on the Divide," tells of a climb during a winter blizzard when the narrator, accompanied only by his dog, scaled the icy face of a Colorado peak over two days, up to the Continental Divide. His reward is an experience of unity with earth and heaven, a renewal both spiritual and intellectual:

> It was a birth
> of consciousness: a continent
> spread out,
>
> broad-winged, two oceans of a brilliant white,
> and I embracing them, the only
> mind.

Range of Light contains many pieces on plant life, but Brosman is at her best in her visions of high mountains and big skies.

Several poems are devoted to the explorers who opened the West for settlement—Indian scouts, French missionaries, gold prospectors, geographers, and soldiers. Brosman endows these explorers with a generosity of spirit derived from their tenacity but also from contact with the mountains. "In the Wind River Range" praises Sacajawea, the "Bird Woman" alone capable of guiding Lewis and Clark to the Pacific. "Stratton's Gold" relates the rescue of a village by a Colorado prospector who cared nothing for the gold he mined: "it was the search / he wanted—courtship, hunting challenge . . . " "La Glorieta" commemorates the accomplishments of a Colorado cavalry brigade that stopped the advance of Confederate troops at a New Mexico mountain pass. The narrator, a survivor of the battle, muses on the soldiers' motivations and concludes:

> We barely knew *ourselves*—still
> less, the war's
> ideals. I think that history, in fact,
> is not so plain . . .
> So petty reasons surely held that
> day,

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But great ones too . . .

All of these figures seem unselfconsciously heroic. Finding themselves in situations as extraordinary as the lands they inhabit, they acted spontaneously and became positive forces in American history. Brosman is unapologetically fascinated with these characters whom some might consider pillagers of the land and invites the reader to pay attention to their importance in the development of the Southwest.

At the center of *Range of Light*, Brosman places several poems on Taos, New Mexico, and its artist and writers' colonies. These contain some of the most humorous moments in the trip west, as the poet, in her attempt to understand the creative energy associated with Taos, finds that the tourist industry has laid claim to art. She visits Kiowa Ranch, refuge for D.H. Lawrence and Georgia O'Keeffe, in the company of an "old curmudgeon" of a guide, who has only "a very imperfect understanding" of the artist he speaks of. Even worse, O'Keeffe's house has become a convention center complete with a huge parking lot that "holds a hundred campers, cars, RVs, packed in rows / as for a tailgate party." Without anger at these insensitive invaders or nostalgia for the time when Taos was not a celebrity spot, the poet nevertheless understands that she must visit these places alone and concentrate on the nature that inspired such great painting and literature. The skyline of Taos Mountain so admired by Lawrence can still give the sensation of the mythical phoenix ever reviving from its ashes and ascending into heaven:

> . . . a bird of indigo
> emerging from the ashes, winging
> upward, calling out
> with hieratic voice and flashing
> blue among the clouds.

Georgia O'Keeffe's work affirms the artist's power to release the spiritual force of common objects: "She knew the meaning / Of the everyday for them, a metaphysics / realized / as in the visible, as in her canvases." "Taos Hymn," the masterpiece of this section, celebrates this unusually perfect city but also the art created in its confines with religious respect:

> So may these artifacts of earth
> remain as evidence of worth,
> attesting to creation's art
> and holy deserts in the heart
> whose blue horizons blaze to fire
> and shimmer with divine desire,
> God held in azimuthal ken,
> Redeeming us and world. Amen.

The native peoples of the Southwest appear more and more frequently in the second half of *Range of Light*. Brosman knows a great deal about American Indian history, writing about several tribes, from the prehistoric Anasazi to modern Hopi and Zuni. Although she does not meet a single living Indian in her travels, their presence permeates the landscapes she visits, and she acknowledges the spiritual superiority of these peoples who respected the land and knew how to live in harmony with nature. She finds evidence of their religious practices and cultural traditions everywhere. The ponderosa pine is a "Shaman still." Winds blow over mesas like "Kokopelli's flute," the magical instrument of New Mexico's legendary humpbacked musician. "Dust Devil" transcribes a transhistorical moment. The poet faces a landscape that has not changed from the earliest days of mankind to the present:

> . . . The Anasazi, also, watched the
> stratus
> drape the mesa tops and anticlines,
> wing
> east to sail among great monolithic
> birds
> of black basalt, or hover, moored
> by stillness.

She points out the connections between Native American and European cultures. Navajo weavings, like the tapestry of Odysseus's Penelope, record the dreams of a beleaguered people and express a love of land and family. The petroglyphs adorning canyon walls are religious symbols as reverential as sculptures in a cathedral:

> . . . the holy sign,
> of how the universe and men engaged
> together in their sacred motions
> . . .

This mythic treatment of Southwest Indian artifacts and culture conveys their importance in this land while avoiding sentimentality and picturesqueness.

The title *Range of Light* has a double meaning. It refers to the entire Southwest and its varied inhabitants; it is the "range" of the traditional folk song, spiritual home to the poet and inspiration for her poetry. Brosman celebrates this land with sustained enthusiasm. Whether she is poised at the Continental Divide or contemplating a cresting river, she expresses gratitude for these places where mortality does not matter since, as she says in "Conejos Rising," "we've got a gorgeous view on life from here." The title also alerts us to the importance of light imagery in these poems. Brosman concentrates on the unusual lights, such as "the blue-flame sky" unknown to city-dwellers, the brilliant snow of the Rockies, the sharpness of moon and starlight on nights that are never cloudy. She is sensitive to the peculiar effects of light on the sands, which have the reflecting power of water, or of sunlight streaming through thin leaves that resembles rays coming into a cathedral from a stained-glass window. Desert plants create a prismatic effect in a deceivingly uniform desert for the discerning eye. Like Georgia O'Keeffe, Brosman recreates the strong colors and sharp lines of this unique region to highlight even the simplest objects, such as berries and cactus thorns. Light imagery buttresses the sense of a spiritual or intellectual illumination that concludes most of the poems in this collection. The poet grasps a similarity between her situation and that of ancient peoples or experiences a moment outside of time, in perfect union with the physical world:

> . . . mind
> becoming what it held a moment:
> space
> tree, mountain, fire—the journey
> and its end as one.

Like Dante, whose influence she acknowledges in "Mud Pots," she translates these moments through light, illumination offering the closest analogy to ecstasy.

In *Range of Light*, Brosman writes in both rhyme and blank verse. There are occasional lines of free verse, usually at the beginning of a poem, but iambic pentameter is the dominant rhythm. I have quoted these poems at length to give an idea of the strong meters which Brosman adapts to description, philosophical reflections, or humor; to technical terms, geographic names, and emotions. The musicality of this verse adds to the pleasure of encountering the Southwest through the eyes of a lover of the land, its rich culture, and history.

Mary Anne O'Neil is a professor of French at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington.

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Why Don't You Just Shoot Me and Get It Over With?

by James O. Tate

The Life of Kingsley Amis
by Zachary Leader
New York: Pantheon Books;
996 pp., $39.95

◆

No, I'm not sorry. I'm not. Really. And I'm not sorry about a lot of things that we won't go into, such as believing in the 1950's that "we" were against communism, and such as ever believing that higher education meant very much, or such as entertaining even for a second, much less decades, the notion that my feelings about Ida Lupino would naturally be returned.

And so I have no regrets about investing my attention in some of the books of the late Sir Kingsley Amis (1922-95). How could I regret that—and why should I? *Lucky Jim* (1954) and *One Fat Englishman* (1963) are two of the funniest novels ever written, and the latter is a particularly subtle example of the necessary sublimation of the lower energies by its author, precisely because we cannot say "by its protagonist." And there are other works of different tones and methods, such as *The Green Man* (1969) and *Ending Up* (1974) and *The Alteration* (1976) and *Jake's Thing* (1978) and *Stanley and the Women* (1984), not to mention other notable fictions. There are as well collections of poetry and short stories and essays and three books on boozing, a book of memoirs, and an edition of the letters by the author of the present volume. So take it altogether and, yes, this was quite a talent and career, a real contribution, and even a political and cultural one. The particularities of Amisland were rather idiosyncratic, and the man had his limitations, but this was a remarkable personality. If he made us laugh many times, he also showed us something, and for all that, the appropriate response is gratitude.

But that doesn't mean that we necessarily want, or even that we have been forced at gunpoint or on a water board, to read about Kingsley Amis in microscopic detail for long enough to fly to Afghanistan, where, having finished the procedures, we might then wish to apply for political asylum. And I freely admit on my own recognizance that I was not forced to read this valuable volume, while conceding with unsolicited frankness that reading it made me feel that I had, indeed, been forced. And forced again and again.

Let me put it this way: I have recently, thanks to reprehensible lapses in judgment, learned more about the paternity of the late Anna Nicole Smith's second child than the late Anna Nicole Smith herself knew; and, more recently, I have learned much more about the drinking, driving, and drugging practices of Lindsay Lohan than Anna Nicole Smith ever knew, or than I had ever known, or ever wanted to know, or even asked to know. But still, even during those elevating moments of instruction and exposure, I never anticipated, much less prophesied, that those woozy dingbats had more human dignity than did the man who was, at least ostensibly, the premier British novelist of the last half of the 20th century.

Kingsley Amis was an only child who enjoyed pretending that he had been oppressed by his father because his father didn't want him to masturbate. So he compensated by cultivating sexual chaos to an absurd degree. Marriage vows, friendship, social contradictions—nothing would stop him from making advances at anything in a skirt. The amount of pain and damage he caused to his family was great, and the exasperation to today's reader is not inconsiderable. Interestingly enough, though, the spoiling of the young Kingsley by his mother was also a lifelong mark. She literally spoonfed him for years, resulting in a thumbsucking passivity that strains credulity. Amis had to be taken care of, practically babied, for the rest of his life, and he made sure that he was, in notorious circumstances, when, after his second wife left him, he commissioned his first wife and her second husband to take him into their house and cater to his needs and whims night and day.

When Kingers had it going, he was a professional writer, systematically productive. His support system allowed him to get the job done—and that, mind you, at the rate of two drunken episodes per day going on for something like an adult lifetime. We would miss the point of Professor Leader's exposition if it were not perfectly clear from his fictions, his essays, and his letters that Amis was honest about all this in the sense that he never denied how abusive and self-indulgent he was. And he did sublimate his misbehaviors variously, in his work.

There were some aspects, then, of his personality that have the effect, illogically enough, of discrediting his achievement. His early membership in the Communist Party was an act of youthful rebellion, nothing more. His later turn right was emotionally derived to thumb his nose at the usual suspects, even though the most authoritative writer on the gross illegitimacy of the Soviet Union, Robert Conquest, was one of his best friends. His deep desire to caricature and mock what he saw led him to deny himself whatever solace might be derived from engagement with literature. He did a Benny Hill number on Keats and Jane Austen and much else, but he wanted the cover of the academy, at least for a while. In addition, Amis's contempt for and ignorance of other cultures—his fear of travel and of experience—were so provincial as to induce many a cringe.

In short, Professor Leader's life of Amis—scholarly, nuanced, and unstinting—must produce a bimodal response, as the behaviorists say. To read about the man who wrote the books, who was often called the funniest man many individuals had ever met, is one thing. But the schizophrenic monstrosity of the compensating artist is so disgusting that delight is blighted, even as it blooms. How ironic that Amis should have lived in such a way as to justify the most paranoid of feminist fantasies, the very ones that he had satirized. How strange that the clever author seems stripped of all authority. And how sad that, at the end, even with all the books on the shelf, we wind up with no brekkers, no champers, no Kingers. I have to recall that moment when I remarked to a young woman that I like reading biographies. "Not me," she said. "They all die at the end." This is the first literary biography I can remember reading that made me think, *Yes, they do all die at the end. But not all of them die soon enough.*

Contributing editor James O. Tate is a professor of English literature at Dowling College on Long Island.

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by Joe Ecclesia

All Saints?

November can be a dreary month in these parts, a season of fierce winds and day-long rains. Clumps of damp leaves plaster the streets and walkways. Leafless maples and oaks raise their limbs to gray, lumpy skies like souls in agony. Stripped of their green vestments, the mountains frown as if in mournful anticipation of winter. As you can see, Your Excellency, the mere thought of November can steer even a poor scribbler toward thoughts poetical.

Of course, November also brings us All Saints' Day, November 1, that feast when the Church celebrates Her saints, known and unknown, who are with God in His Heaven. Sainthood, Your Excellency, is why I am writing to you.

Many people seem confused about saints these days. When *Time* broke the story about Mother Teresa's troubled interior life, commentators such as Christopher Hitchens used her as an example of a religious opportunist who soldiers on despite lost illusions. Some of my acquaintances were angry with Mother Teresa, as if she had somehow fooled them. When I mentioned the idea of "a real dark night of the soul," a state of spiritual loneliness common to saints (and to the rest of us mere mortals as well), one of these friends snapped, "That's why we have psychiatrists and Prozac."

Other misconceptions about saints abound. Whenever a certain Lutheran relative hears me mention a particular saint such as John of God (patron saint of booksellers, which I once was) or Elizabeth Ann Seton (a patron saint of teachers, which I now am), she goes ballistic, theologically speaking. "We're all saints!" she cries. She refers to the New Testament passages in which the word *saint* is synonymous with *Christian*, but to insist so vehemently that all of us are saints sounds so, well, American to me, like saying all people are nice. Others look for saints in dubious places. Some have elevated Martin Luther King, Jr., Princess Diana, and Elvis Presley to sainthood. One friend who enjoys his bourbon has taken for his patron saint the alcoholic Sebastian Flyte from Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. When I point out that Sebastian is a fiction, he simply ignores me, hoisting in benediction his glass of bourbon, Sprite, and water—a concoction known here as a Presbyterian. (Is there, I wonder, any drink called a Roman Catholic, Your Excellency?)

Even more befuddling to many of us is the question of how to become a saint. Some seem to find good deeds a necessary part of sainthood, yet, if working in soup kitchens and staying off the sauce were routes to sanctity, then every Methodist I ever knew (back when I myself followed Wesley) would be canonized at death. "Not to be a saint—this is the only tragedy": So wrote Leon Bloy, and yet no one can explain precisely how to become a saint. We know how to make doctors and lawyers, plumbers and politicians, but there are no clear-cut paths, no required studies, no diplomas for becoming a saint.

For many of us older folks it is, I suspect, a point of too little, too late: This foggy journey to sainthood seems arduous beyond contemplation. Our will is weak; our predilection for sin, strong. Even our mild vices—drinking a bit too much, gossip, that extra helping of turkey—would necessarily have to yield to painful virtue: a deeper prayer life, works of mercy, frequent confession, daily attendance at Mass. Although several of my friends believe that they are bound for Heaven simply because they are good, such certainty seems little more than wishful thinking. Most likely, we will need many prayers to put a smile on Saint Peter's face. Thank heavens for the gift of Purgatory.

Young people are a different matter altogether. Contrary to what many adults believe, Your Excellency, young people today want challenges. When asked why she had chosen her particular path, Mother Teresa famously replied, "I wanted a hard life." (By holding her far from the celestial embrace for which she longed, God arguably granted her request.) Many young people I know also want physical, mental, and spiritual challenges. Instead, our society gives them condoms, drugs, and electronic toys. Our own *confirmandi* want to know God and how to live a life of holiness, and what do we offer in return? Rock-music retreats, balloons, goofball games, and sappy textbooks. Will none of our religious educators ever understand how much young people despise this sort of trash? They ask for meat, and we give them pap.

Why not give them meat? Why not at least show them the tools that foster sainthood? Why not, in fact, crank up a diocesan boot camp where young people from the ages of 14 to 22 could go for two-week sessions throughout the summer, where they could learn the techniques of prayer, fasting, physical and spiritual hardiness, and acts of sacrifice?

Some of our young, tough diocesan priests along with members of certain religious orders—the Fraternity of Saint Peter and the Nashville Dominicans have both operated similar camps—could staff the camp. They could act as the spiritual equivalents of a Marine Corps drill instructor. Camp counselors would be graduates of the camp. This cadre would all work together to train up their charges. Daily prayers might include the liturgy of the hours, confession, spiritual recollections, an hour of silence spent before the Blessed Sacrament. (Do you know, Your Excellency, how much silence terrifies our young people?) Our budding saints could learn the practice of fasting; they could endure physical hardships. Former societies ranging from the American Sioux to Ganges holy men to Carmelite monks understood the efficacy of physical suffering and hardship in regard to faith and prayer.

We don't need any more confirmation classes going on bogus retreats or playing childish games. We do need tough young Catholics. We need a Marine Corps of Catholics who can individually combine love with will to bring about their own sainthood and to make saints of those around them.

From the Halls of Montezuma, Your Excellency, and wishing you a splendid All Saints' Day,

Joe Ecclesia

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by Scott P. Richert

In the Garden

"How's your garden doing this year?" It's a familiar question, as normal as the greeting that began the conversation and the goodbye that will end it. I cannot start a conversation with my grandmother, or an aunt or uncle or cousin, without being asked the question within a minute or two—or, depending on the time of year, one of the related questions: "So, are you going to put out a garden this year?" and "How did your garden do?"

To the outside observer, the question might seem like idle chit-chat, the kind of thing you say when you don't know what else to talk about—like asking about the weather. But listen a little longer, and you realize that there's more to it; the question is only the beginning of the conversation, because they each have gardens, too. How many tomato plants did you put out? What varieties of peppers? The melons are doing well, but the squash failed early in the season. It's been a great year for okra. You grow everything in raised beds, don't you?

We talk about the weather, too, because it tells us something about the state of our gardens. We've had too much rain; they haven't had enough. The hot, dry weather, ironically, has made for the best watermelons in years, because they grow like wildfire and send down amazing taproots. The last frost was early, and it looks like the first frost will be late; this may be the longest growing season in years. Some of our fruit trees bloomed too early, however, because we had a stretch of warm weather before that last frost, so we'll have no plums or mountain ash berries this year.

We never talk, though, about "the environment" or "global warming" or "greenhouse gases" or "carbon emissions." More often than not, the people who chatter on endlessly about such things would have to answer "How's your garden doing this year?" with "I don't have a garden." Too busy worrying about "the environment" while spending most of their day engaged in activities that increase carbon emissions and greenhouse gases, they do not have any time left to spend with, and in, nature. They have never consciously reduced nature to the abstraction of "the environment"; the very structure of their lives has done it for them.

When I was younger, talking about our gardens was a common activity among most of the people I knew. Now, I rarely hold such conversations with anyone other than family or coworkers. Partly, that's because I grew up in a small village along a river that flowed through some of the best farmland in the Midwest. Our yards were large; our soil, fertile; and families had plenty of children to send out to weed and water and harvest.

Now, though, I live in a mid-sized city, which surrounds a river that flows through some of the best farmland in the Midwest. City folk today are less likely to plant a garden (at least a vegetable garden), but you can still see, especially in certain older neighborhoods, where gardens and home orchards used to be. Raised beds and terraced sections of back yards are covered with grass. Apple trees, beechnuts, mulberries, edible crab apples go unharvested except by birds and bugs and squirrels, while the homeowners purchase unripe pears from California and Chile, hazelnuts imported from Turkey, and gigantic but tasteless Mexican-grown raspberries at $3.99 a pint.

There's an inverse relationship between the rising cost of industrially raised fruit and vegetables and their declining flavor and quality. You simply cannot ship a ripe tomato to Rockford from Mexico or California, so they are picked green and artificially ripened in the trucks on the way here. (Any that ripen on the vine are sold to canners for tomato juice or paste or sauce.) For the dubious pleasure of eating a bland and often mealy tomato, we pay for the cost of transportation and of the ripening agent. As late as a decade or two ago, most people purchased such produce only in the winter, because even chain supermarkets bought what fruit and vegetables they could locally during the growing season. Now, you can't find a naturally ripened tomato or peach in a Rockford supermarket in August. In part, that's because there's less and less locally grown produce for stores to buy; but sadly, it's also often a conscious decision based on corporate logistics and supply lines, as well as a desire to provide "consumers" with a consistent "product" throughout the year—even if it's consistently bad.

When the "fresh" produce that's available is so unappealing, is it any wonder that people turn to processed foods that at least have flavor, however artificial and unattractive that flavor might be to anyone with even a slightly refined palate? But processed foods, of course, require more energy and more chemicals and travel farther between field and plate than even raw industrial produce does.

In the end, it all takes its toll—on "the environment," on our culture, our neighborhoods, our families, our health. Congress and the United Nations spend time and resources debating the causes of global warming and environmental degradation and negotiating treaties and laws to set standards and goals and restrictions, and taxpayers pay—both monetarily and in loss of freedom—to implement it all. Of course, we also pay taxes to support federally subsidized industrial agriculture and state and local tax breaks for the national chains that contribute so much to the very phenomena that Congress and the United Nations wish to eradicate.

How much, I wonder, could carbon emissions and greenhouse gases be reduced if all those who could devoted a little corner of their yard to a garden, and bought other produce at their local farmers' market or through a CSA (community-supported agriculture) or coop, and patronized, when possible, those locally owned grocery stores that still try to purchase produce nearby? What if people lived the way that people used to live, instead of neglecting their own responsibilities and clamoring for legislation to deal with the consequences?

One thing is certain: Children would grow up once again knowing what a tomato really tastes like. And they would have something to talk about the next time their grandmother calls.

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Letter From Russia

by Andrea Crandall

Iran, Russia, and Debt

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Historians are quick to recognize struggles among national powers, but they usually neglect the power of organized international finance, which has aims above and beyond those of its host countries. In fact, during the *Belle Époque*, great powers such as Britain and France were simply the workhorses of the financial elite. The same can be said for Russia—both then and now. And then as now, Iran has been a tool of the financiers to manipulate Russia and acquire her assets.

In the 1870's, international banking was colonizing Iran through the British, a situation that was detrimental to Russian interests in the Middle East. The first financial emissary, Baron Julius de Reuters, was the scion of a Göttingen banking family who enjoyed a meteoric rise to wealth peddling information between the London and Paris stock exchanges. Despite the Russians' best efforts, he won the charter for Iran's central bank (the Imperial Bank of Persia) in 1898. The bank was floated in London, and David Sassoon took a controlling interest in the monopoly created by this arrangement. The Russian government tried to counteract this influence with their own (less successful) bank in Iran, the Russian Loan and Development Bank. During the ensuing struggle, Russia backed the interests of the shahdom with loans and troops, while British bankers focused on establishing economic monopolies at the expense of political stability in Iran.

Merchants and "liberals" began to revolt against the shah, and "secret societies" sprang up to erode his power. These anarchists undermined cooperation between the Russians and the shah by way of assassination and "spontaneous revolts" in the name of "freedom." Azeri and Kurdish minorities began to agitate violently for independence. Eventually, Shah Muhammad Ali sought asylum in Russia.

The upheaval in Iran played into the bankers' hands and undermined their European rival, so that, by 1918, international banking was the only real power left in Iran. The country fell into famine and did not recover until a new ruler, the secular Iranian nationalist Reza Shah, revoked the Imperial Bank of Persia's charter to issue money and broke the hold of foreign loans by increasing tax revenues—including those from the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

Russia's battles with the financiers did not begin in Iran. By the end of the 19th century, Russia's international power was declining, mostly because of her failure to develop economically after the manner of Britain or France. Unlike Britain and France, Russia's finances had not been dominated by the merchant-banking syndicate. Instead, Russian Finance Minister Sergei Witte thought that he could use loans from the bankers to develop Russia without compromising national sovereignty.

To understand 19th-century European politics, it is necessary to understand how European governments were financed. Loans were organized through a consortium of private bankers who would then hold the national debt or sell it on to other investors. These private bankers could be based in London, Paris, Frankfurt (later, Berlin), or Amsterdam but still maintain their connections—through a close-knit community of families and partnerships. Major banking families would send their sons to allies in different cities so the boys could learn the finer points of international banking.

These banks could compete with one another, but cooperation generally ruled the day. National governments could switch between, for instance, the Paris and London markets to raise funds; but the reason for switching would be to utilize a different set of local political contacts in the bargaining process. Consequently, these banks developed a privileged understanding of European politics and economics.

On the other hand, Russian society was more agrarian, which meant Russia was not closely integrated into the financial networks that sponsored the Industrial Revolution and enabled both massive military campaigns and the spread of empire. While this kept power in the Russian government, it was also a liability: Russia was in competition with better-armed countries and needed to protect valuable natural resources. By the 1890's, it was obvious that Russia had to modernize quickly.

To obtain the capital it so desperately needed, the Russian government attempted to raise money in the French markets. This was a dicey game: The major French banking houses had extensive oil interests in the Caspian oil region, and the French government was obsessed with building railways through Russia to protect strategic interests in Asia. Financiers understood the difficulty that Russia faced and used her weakness to their advantage.

In 1894, the French government began to restrict Russia's access to French capital markets. At the same time, the French press began a smear campaign targeting Russian securities. These two events coincided perfectly to allow a group of French financiers who had lost money on Turkish investments to blackmail the Russian government: Either buy our Turkish interests, or the trouble for Russian securities will continue. Finance Minister Witte would not allow this deal to go though, but, in order to stop it, he had to buy off the French press.

That shady dealing left a bad impression on Witte. He tried to raise funds in England and the United States, but to no avail, so the stormy relationship with France continued: In 1901, Witte worked with the Parisian Rothschilds to organize another loan to Russia on the condition that the Russian government would not take out any other loans that year. At the 11th hour, the French finance minister refused access to the market unless Russia gave special privileges to French financiers and businessmen. Witte was able to derail this ultimatum: Presciently, he had insisted on written assurances of a loan from the French government one year before. Attacks from the French press began anew, and, once again, they were subdued for a short time with more Russian money.

The Russo-Japanese war forced Russia to take out a whole new series of loans from the French, but with strings attached: Russia was required to purchase French-manufactured war goods at highly inflated prices. Naturally, these obligations were supported by the French press. (The Japanese side of this war was

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financed by the Schiffs of Frankfurt am Main, using American money.) In January 1905, the banking firm of Mendelssohn & Co. initiated a German loan to Russia. Russia was in dire straits by this time: The country was falling into revolution, and the hounds were circling.

In February 1905, representatives of BNP Paribas went to St. Petersburg to threaten the Russian government with a fall in the price of Russian securities on the Paris Stock Exchange and to demand more money for the French press. The French government insisted on "liberal" reforms in Russia if the czar wanted French support to continue. German creditors began to demand payments in gold, and huge amounts of it flowed out of the Russian State Bank's reserves.

Russia had grown so dependent on the French financial system that her foreign policy was being dictated by the French establishment. French-dominated banking groups sprang up in Russia and the Balkans, and the old Russian banks were "restructured" under French guidance. By 1917, the Russian government had been changed completely.

Today's furor over Iranian WMDs is designed to manipulate Russia through Iran; and the manipulation serves the same purpose that it did in 1898. This time, however, Washington is the protagonist: Britain and France are exhausted. The first thrust for Russian assets yielded the chaos of the Yeltsin years; now, the "threat" of Iranian WMDs is providing an excuse for war—a more direct approach.

The Yeltsin administration let foreign bankers systematically loot Russia. The inequitable sale of natural resources to private companies, such as Yukos, has ties to the old financial interests. The fraud scandal involving Harvard's Institute for International Development and USAID is testimony to the corruption surrounding U.S. involvement with Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Perhaps the most blatant abuse of lending power came in 1997, when the Paris Club, a U.S.-led organization of governments that lend to other governments, used very unorthodox accounting methods to overvalue Russia's assets. This allowed foreign banks to make massive loans to their Russian counterparts. On top of that, commercial banks in Russia accumulated huge amounts of off-balance-sheet forward contracts (high-risk investments) with overseas financial institutions (valued at six billion dollars by early 1998). Restrictions on nonresident ownership of government debt were removed, and swaths of it went abroad.

The Russian government had difficulty collecting tax revenue to pay back these debts—a situation that was not helped by the corruption surrounding the Yeltsin-led privatization scheme. Then came the speculative attacks on the ruble, which further drained Russia's assets. And, while the country was being squeezed to penury, her lenders didn't think Russia would dare default, for fear of being denied credit in the future. The Russian government saw things differently, and relations with the financial community turned sour: Commercial banks got their fingers burned when Russian loan repayments were suspended. Moscow lightened the debt burden by defaulting—a more desperate course of action than Reza Shah's. Once the financial chaos had dissipated, Russia began seven years (and counting) of impressive economic growth.

Enter the Iranian "weapons of mass destruction."

The U.S. law prohibiting WMD exports to Iran includes a plan for using money to influence Russian foreign policy. If Russia sells arms to the Islamic republic, the United States can withhold capital for the International Space Station. (The details explaining how Washington can wiggle its way out of space-station payments take up almost 50 percent of the text of the Iran Nonproliferation Act of 2000.)

But now Washington wants to arm Iran—so they brought China in to do it. The existence of Iranian missiles that could be topped with nuclear material from Tehran's energy programs will be the excuse for war, and the plans are in motion. On April 9, the U.S. Treasury Department blocked the assets of three Iranian energy companies. On April 17, the State Department placed arms-export sanctions on three Chinese companies for contributing to the spread of WMDs to Iran and Syria. These sanctions come less than a month after WMD-related import bans on Beijing were permanently lifted.

Meanwhile, the United States has continued to arm complicit Middle Eastern powers: On April 20, the U.S. Navy announced its intention to sell Turkey torpedoes, and the U.S. Air Force wants to sell Israel bombs for her aircraft-combat systems. America is also rearming Norway and trying to worm her way into Russian missile defenses.

An independent Iran is the only buffer between Russia's Caspian oil and U.S.-run Iraq. Israel needs to control the transport of Caspian oil to be financially independent of the United States. America needs that cheap oil to keep the electorate satisfied.

Once again, Russia's economic prosperity is attracting investment banks. Deutsche Bank has been busy there for some time. Société Générale is expanding through its Vostok retail bank and Rosbank. Goldman Sachs made a direct appeal to President Putin to help expand contacts with the Russian government. Lehman Brothers has hired the brother of Boris Jordan (the founder of Renaissance Capital, a firm that benefited greatly from the corrupt sale of Russian state assets) to smooth their entry.

As Washington pushes its plans to gain control of Russian assets, the financial interests are working a strategy of their own: Apply pressure to Iran, become creditor to Moscow, then squeeze. They can sit back and watch the political chaos that our policy is producing and anticipate the lucrative opportunities that will follow. And, if American arms don't deliver for them, the bankers can always turn to their Chinese partners later.

Andrea Crandall is an economist at Sanders Research Associates.

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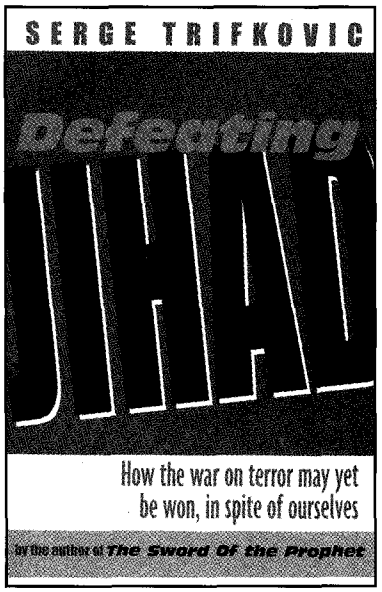
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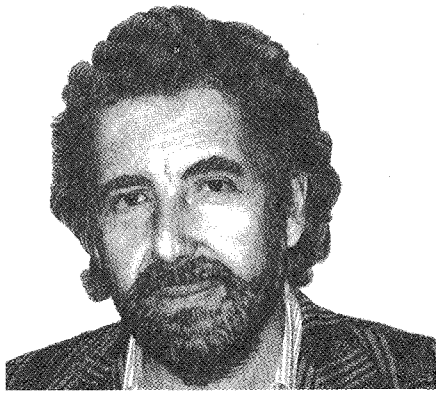
by Andrei Navrozov

A Sense of Perspective



It may seem to the least demanding of readers that this column, though generously meandering of thought, is short of action. The trouble, I must admit, is that I have no sense of perspective. There may well be more references to current events in a couple of pages of Plato's *Dialogues* than in everything I have written in this space.

It is worth remembering, however, that our culture did not begin with Socrates. Telling me that I don't know how to write is a little like telling the artists decorating the temple at Karnak that, according to the laws of perspective, the more distant objects and figures must be made smaller than those in the foreground, whereas they have used the relative size of these objects and figures to reflect their political or social importance. Yet geometric perspective, like the keystone arch so rarely seen in their architecture, was known to the mathematically minded Egyptians, who simply chose not to apply it to their painting. Nor did the Greeks, and it was not until its usefulness in theater set design was first appreciated by them that it can be said to have been invented or discovered.

To be at all useful, perspective must have a captive audience, such as the viewer positioned directly in front of a Mantegna hanging on a flat wall or the seated spectator in the theater transfixed by a new Sophocles tearjerker. Without insult to either, it may be argued that a Byzantine icon has an inner and sacred life that is not dependent on a captive audience, and that the triumphal figure of Ramses must be great irrespective of where his people happen to kneel. The icon works miracles even when the believers in them are at home sleeping, for it is miraculous all by itself. The pharaoh's greatness is objective, with the consequence that all of Egypt is but a subject. But why stop there? It may be argued that Western culture has already been flooded by verisimilitude, and that perspective, insofar as it favors a mass illusion over the particular truth of life, is not unlike money, which likewise aims at the vanishing point in whatever is priceless in nature as well as in man.

The balance between contemplation and action, in life as in art, is something the individual soul must pass through the eye of the needle to find, and the good news is that mine has. The laws of perspective are as nothing to me now, because the axioms and the lemmas which I want to bear my name are 99.99 percent metaphysical.

I would describe myself as a picaresque thinker, a writer of essays full of farcical capers and improbable escapades of the mind, an author born to the art of misgiving as Fielding and Smollett were born to the art of causerie. Why this is so I cannot say, but such is the nature of my doubtful gift. To ask me to describe an incident in the street, limiting myself strictly to the events observed, is as ungrateful a proposition as asking a Trappist oblate to cover a football match on the radio. Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that I have always been a wanderer, a vagrant, an immigrant, evermore in several places at once, heart here, soul there, liver and kidneys somewhere else again. A deracinated writer is drawn and quartered by life, and even if, at the end of it, his ashes should find a safe resting place in Westminster Abbey, this is but trifling compensation for leaving one's tongue in somebody's kitchen in Moscow when one's eyes are on San Marco in Venice and there's something that badly needs saying.

Such experience is only half-comic, reminiscent as it is of the plight of the half-mortal fairy in W.S. Gilbert's *Iolanthe*. It is also half-mortifying, like the tales of the undead in Yiddish folklore. At times, it is an amusing dinner-table pastime, something like the game of Broken Telephone we used to play when I was a child. At other times, it is a cruel ordeal of broken troths, repeatedly interrupted truths, and barely audible, garbled truisms, for the very grave reason that if one is ever in several places at once, one is left with a very few absolutes. Almost everything under the sun seems to have a latitude and a longitude.

The turning point in this life full of lost connections came upon my meeting a young woman who believed nobody except known liars and in nothing except the proved power of her beauty. Every value to her was relative, apart from her weight on the bathroom scales and the color of the highlights in her hair. She loved neither sunsets nor jewels, she trusted neither in God nor in man, and she feared only emotion, which, apart from giving a woman wrinkles, she knew had a way of rendering itself absolute in the dead of night. Yet outwardly, she functioned as normally as the rest, and seeing through this façade was as edifying an experience as watching a film dubbed masterfully into another language and wondering how in the devil's name this kind of thing can ever be done at all.

To win her, I realized, I had to go straight. To win her absolutely, I must at last define my own absolutes. For every one of her head-shrinking relativities, I needed to find a Newtonian incantation. For every one of those barbarous untruths, I had to sing her a song of Solomon.

This is not the time or the place to remember how it all ended, but to go straight I did. A rich man gets stuck in the eye of the needle not so much because he is fat, but because he is crooked. The experience was my narrow gate, my redaction, and the reason I still believe in being a writer, and now that I have earned the right to tell a truth as awkwardly as I please, it would be silly not to exercise it just because the expert on geometric perspective in the third row is getting ready to hit me in the eye with a rotten orange. ©

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by Srdja Trifkovic

Staying the Course

Those of us who grew up under communism remember well the ritual of the Leader's Speech. At a Party congress—invariably dubbed "historic" even before it began—or on the occasion of the opening of a new steel mill, the Dear Comrade would deliver a much-heralded oration. It usually contained three main ingredients: "We" are making great overall progress, preordained by historical necessity; there are enemies who want to disrupt "us" because they are bad, envious, or corrupt; and "our" endeavor will be victorious, even if the fruits of that success will belong to a generation yet to come.

The Speech was useless as an indicator of what was really going on east of the Iron Curtain, and it bore little relation to the grim reality of Real Socialism. Nevertheless, it was valuable to Western diplomats and homegrown apparatchiks versed in decoding hidden meanings and implied intentions. It provided an insight into the mind-set of men who pretended, and often believed, that their words and ideas could alter reality.

On September 13, President George W. Bush delivered a speech on Iraq worthy of the Kremlin Congress Hall c. 1969. It came after weeks of a carefully orchestrated White House campaign that sought to alter the terms of domestic debate about the war. Mr. Bush opened with the assertion that, in Iraq, "an ally of the United States is fighting for its survival":

> Terrorists and extremists who are at war with us around the world are seeking to topple Iraq's government, dominate the region, and attack us here at home. If Iraq's young democracy can turn back these enemies, it will mean a more hopeful Middle East and a more secure America. This ally has placed its trust in the United States. And tonight, our moral and strategic imperatives are one: We must help Iraq defeat those who threaten its future and also threaten ours.

The claim that Iraq is America's "ally" that "has placed its trust in the United States" is on par with Moscow's assertion, in August 1968, that Czechoslovakia was a Soviet ally and that the Warsaw Pact military intervention was but a form of "fraternal help" to a fellow member of the "socialist community." In both cases, the "allied" population heartily loathed the helper: According to the latest BBC-ABC poll, 60 percent of Iraqis believe that attacks on American forces are justified. In both cases, the people had no say in the forging of the alleged alliance. In both cases, the enemy *in situ* was equated with the global enemy: All opposition to the "placing of trust" that accompanied the victories of the Red Army in 1944-45, or those of the "Coalition" in 2003, were supposedly inspired by external forces, global in scope and evil in intent. In addition, Mr. Bush's eccentric assertion that America is but one of 36 countries jointly fighting the "War on Terror" in Iraq was pure Brezhneviana.

The President invoked the testimony before Congress of Gen. David Petraeus—a military professional whose presumed impartiality was supposed to compensate for the administration's tattered credibility—to assert that "conditions in Iraq are improving, that we are seizing the initiative from the enemy and that the troop surge is working." It was noteworthy, however, that he had replaced the goal of "victory," advanced in his previous speeches, with that of "success" in his latest address. He singled out the Anbar Province as a success story that can be replicated elsewhere and paid tribute "to an Iraqi government that has decided to take on the extremists" and should now proceed to achieving reconciliation.

Only one day later, however, and with no pomp, the White House issued a new report stating that the government of Iraq had made almost no progress in achieving stability and reconciliation across the country's ethno-sectarian divide. The report suggested that, in the previous two months, Prime Minister Maliki and his team had made headway on only 2 of the 18 stated "benchmarks" for political progress. The assessment further validated the findings of the National Intelligence Report announced last August and the Government Accountability Office report published on September 4. In addition, the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, headed by retired Marine Gen. James Jones, determined on September 6 that the Iraqi army "cannot yet meaningfully contribute to denying terrorists safe haven." All four studies flatly contradicted Mr. Bush's claim that political progress was being made to match military improvements.

The highlight of Mr. Bush's speech was his announcement that 21,000 American soldiers would be withdrawn by next summer. Like a comrade playing with Five Year Plan statistics, he failed to mention that those troops would have to be withdrawn anyway—unless he were to extend deployments of units scheduled for rotation, which would be politically disastrous. If effected, the announced withdrawal would merely bring the number of American soldiers in Iraq back to the pre-surge level of last January. Since the target of his speech was not so much his Democratic opposition as the Republicans weary of the war, however, the President's domestic objective may have been attained. The promise of even a partial pullout has bought him another six months with several wavering GOP senators, and he needs to hold the support of only 34 of them to sustain a presidential veto of any unwanted mandates. Until next spring at least, the Democrats won't be able to muster enough Republican votes to break a Senate filibuster and pass legislation that would impose a withdrawal timetable.

Buying more time is meaningless in the absence of a strategy to end the war—and Mr. Bush has none. He is staying the course to nowhere. His last attempt at devising a coherent strategy, presented last January, treated the military "surge" as a tactical device to buy time for the Iraqi government to achieve reconciliation and bridge sectarian divides. That expec-

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tation had always been the weak link in his plan. It postulated the favorable development of a "known unknown" that is, and has always been, outside American control. According to Mr. Bush's own standards, which were established when the surge was announced, the strategy has failed: Iraq's collapsed society has been unable to develop institutions and mechanisms capable of bridging ethnosectarian divides.

A rare moment of technical accuracy in Mr. Bush's address came when he said that "the vision for a reduced American presence . . . has the support of Iraqi leaders from all communities" and that American engagement will extend beyond his presidency. The former has been true ever since the occupation began. The latter is inevitable since Mr. Bush is both unwilling and unable to contemplate a plan that would enable the United States to start disengaging before January 2009. On current form, according to General Petraeus, we shall need five to ten years for Iraq to be stabilized enough that U.S. forces may withdraw.

Iraq is with us to stay, then, and, even after Bush, a hasty withdrawal would be neither prudent nor moral. American interests are threefold: to disengage without appearing utterly defeated; to leave behind the least undesirable *status quo* by separating warring factions into three self-governing units; and to counter as much as possible the advantage gained by America's rivals and enemies. In particular, the creation of an anti-Shia, anti-Iranian, nationalist Sunni-Arab entity in central and western Iraq would be the best possible bulwark against Ahmadinejad's intention to create a Tehran-dominated belt that would extend over Iraq and Syria to the Hezbollah-controlled redoubt in southern Lebanon.

Mr. Bush has warned that, if we were to be driven out of Iraq, "extremists of all strains would be emboldened," and the country would face an humanitarian nightmare. Of course, the quagmire is of his own making—Iraq gave a boost to Al Qaeda's propaganda, recruitment, and fundraising and provided a targeting and training area for terrorists—but a hasty withdrawal would indeed turn the current disaster into catastrophe. His successor will inherit the moral obligation to the people of Iraq to make amends for his predecessor's criminal folly by managing disengagement in the least harmful manner possible. In addition, an obvious humbling of America by the combined efforts of Al Qaeda, the Badr Brigades, Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army, *et al.*, would do wonders for the jihadist cause worldwide.

The President's reiterated vision of "a free Iraq," "critical to the security of the United States," which will deny Al Qaeda a safe haven, "counter the destructive ambitions of Iran," and be "an anchor of stability in the region" and "our partner in the fight against terror" is unattainable. Devising a viable disengagement strategy demands discarding the illusion that Iraq can be a "democracy" as well as an American "ally." Yes, said Austrian Emperor Franz II, on being told that a certain gentleman was a patriot, "but is he a patriot for me?" When praising democracy in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East, Mr. Bush should ask himself if the project's actual or potential beneficiaries are democrats *for us*.

Iraq can be ruled as she had been ruled before March 2003, and as the bulk of the Arab world is still ruled today: as an autocracy, with occasional sham elections perhaps, but with a firm hold of the security services on the political life always. Such an Iraq could indeed be a partner of sorts, as the Hashemites in Amman and Hosni Mubarak are American partners. A "free Iraq," on the other hand—free from an American military presence, and with the ruling political elite representative of the will of the majority of her citizens—will either disintegrate into three monolithic ethno-religious entities or become a Shiite-dominated theocracy closely allied with Iran.

Some U.S. field commanders are talking openly of nondemocratic alternatives to the current Shiite-dominated regime. Brig. Gen. John Bednarek, a senior member of the U.S. Task Force Lightning operating in the Diyala Province, thus told CNN that "[d]emocratic institutions are not necessarily the way ahead in the long-term future." His commander, Maj. Gen. Benjamin Mixon, advocates putting in place a "government that is really a partner with the United States." Senior American officers in General Petraeus's entourage suggest privately that the entire Iraqi government must be ousted by "constitutional or non-constitutional" means and replaced with a stable "but not necessarily democratic" entity. Administration officials still talk about democracy, but they admit that their ambitions are not as "lofty" as they once had been.

Generals on active duty are loath to make politically sensitive off-the-cuff remarks. Mixon's and Bednarek's statements would have sounded heretical only a year ago. Today, they reflect a growing realization behind the scenes that "stability" should come before "democracy" in Iraq. There are two additional indicators: The United States is openly arming Sunni militias in Anbar, and, under new constitutional changes announced last August, former Ba'ath Party members will be able to apply for government posts and reenlist in the military.

Such disjointed signs of prudence are no substitute for strategy, however, and the White House has none. As he enters his last year in office, Mr. Bush is staying the rudderless course in Iraq and leading his party into an electoral abyss at home. Instead of thinking new thoughts, the leading Republican candidates are either not thinking at all (*e.g.*, Sen. John McCain) or being advised by those same neoconservative ideologues who cooked up the Iraqi disaster—notably, Rudolph Giuliani, whose chief foreign-policy advisor is Norman Podhoretz. A day after Mr. Bush's September 13 speech, Mr. Podhoretz declared that the Bush Doctrine "sets forth a two-pronged strategy, one military and the other political, designed to confront the new kind of threat we are now facing":

> The military component is preemption (because, as the President has said, "if we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long") and the political component is democratization (to "drain the swamps" in which Islamofascist terrorism breeds) . . . [T]here is no other viable way to victory over Islamofascism.

"Democratizing Islam" is impossible, but democratic procedural devices may be used in the Mohammedan heartland by those who stand to gain from the charade. Thus applied, "democracy" means power for Hamas in Palestine, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Erdogan and Gul in Turkey, today—and for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Syria, for the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria, and for Bin Laden in Saudi Arabia or Pakistan, tomorrow.

The Bush Doctrine is a mix of stupidity and insanity. Its nominal author is a flawed man and a failed politician. The notion of his mendacious mentors' return to the position of influence next November, in whatever guise, is as daunting as the more likely prospect of four more Clinton years. ◁

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The End of the Balkan Interlude?

by Ted Galen Carpenter

Unlike the 1990's, when the turmoil from the breakup of Yugoslavia dominated the security agenda of the United States and her NATO allies, subsequent years have been relatively quiet. The civil war in Bosnia has not flared up since the conclusion of the Dayton Accords in late 1995. Albania, which teetered on the brink of civil war in the mid-1990's, has not seen a repetition of that instability following the temporary introduction of a stabilization force led by Greece and Italy. The Kosovo controversy culminated in NATO's intense bombing of Serbia in 1999, a campaign designed to compel Belgrade to relinquish control over the province to an international occupation. Instability in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) in late 2000 and early 2001, which threatened to become another Balkan crisis, soon subsided. Slobodan Milosevic's fall from power in October 2000 led to the emergence of a democratic Serbia and the gradual erosion of that country's status as the pariah of Europe.

The reduction in turbulence has been greeted with relief in Washington. That is understandable, because the United States has had far more pressing security matters on her agenda since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The last thing U.S. policymakers wanted to deal with, given the requirements of the war against radical Islamic terrorism and the debacle of the Iraq war, were additional security problems in the Balkans.

The recent quiescence of the Balkans is somewhat deceptive, however. Beneath the apparent stability, serious problems still fester. Moreover, some of the policies now being pushed by Washington and allied capitals threaten to reignite many of those controversies. There is a very real possibility that the interlude in Balkan troubles that the United States and the members of the European Union have enjoyed is about to come to an end. If that occurs, it will have significant implications for both America and the E.U. countries. It may have an especially adverse impact on Greece, since Greek firms have become very large investors in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Those investments are based on the assumption that the relative stability of recent years will continue.

The most prominent development that could bring the period of relative stability to an end is the effort to establish a final political status for Kosovo. Although the U.N. resolution authorizing international governance of the province following NATO's air assault ostensibly recognized that Kosovo remained part of Serbia, only the most naive observers doubted that the province would ultimately be granted independence. That suspicion was borne out earlier this year when U.N. envoy Martti Ahtisaari recommended "conditional" or "supervised" independence, disregarding Serbia's offer to give Kosovo extensive autonomy within the Serbian state.

Belgrade immediately cried foul, and for understandable reasons. Not only did the Ahtisaari plan envision the forcible dismemberment of a U.N. member state by international edict, it proposed the dismemberment of a democratic state. Russia has strongly supported Serbia's protests, threatening to veto a resolution on independence if it is put before the U.N. Security Council. The United States and the leading powers in the European Union have, in turn, threatened to bypass the Security Council and grant Kosovo independence without U.N. approval. The offer by the Western powers in mid-June to delay a final decision for four months to give time for further negotiations is not likely to alter the outcome. That gesture seems more designed to give Russia some diplomatic cover if Moscow decides to retreat from its threat to veto a Security Council resolution.

Threats to bypass the U.N. Security Council are reminiscent of NATO's actions in 1999, when it became clear that Russia would veto a resolution authorizing the use of force against Serbia over the Kosovo issue. Washington and its allies simply did an end run around the Security Council and waged war on NATO's supposed authority as a regional security organization.

Granting Kosovo independence entails significant ramifications even if it receives Security Council approval. The measure sets a worrisome precedent in an international system with an abundance of regional secessionist movements. Indeed, Moscow could one day cite such a decision as a precedent for dismembering neighboring Georgia by recognizing the independence of that country's Abkhazian or South Ossetian regions. Or it could use it as justification someday to wrench the Russian-speaking Crimea away from neighboring Ukraine.

As troubling as granting Kosovo independence under U.N. auspices might be, however, doing it over the objections of Moscow and Belgrade entails the risk of even more serious consequences. At the very least, it would poison Serbia's relations with both the United States and the European Union—a development that would hardly promote stability in the Balkans. Although both Washington and the leading E.U. capitals have held out the carrot of more rapid Serbian integration into NATO and the European Union if Belgrade ends its objections to an independent Kosovo, Serbian officials have strongly signaled that they are not interested in such a deal.

If they value political survival, they have little choice but to take that stance. Attempting to appease the United States and the E.U. powers would produce an extremely negative domestic reaction. The ultranationalist Serbian Radical Party was already the strongest party in the country's recent legislative elections, and only a coalition of more moderate parties kept the Radicals out of power. Failing to resist the amputation of Kosovo, which most Serbs regard as the cradle of their civilization, would likely lead to a surge of support for the Radical Party–a development that Washington and its allies would regard as anathema.

Granting Kosovo independence also is likely to lead to an increase in abuses against the remaining non-Albanian inhabitants. During the 1999 war and its aftermath, more than 240,000 people (mostly Serbs, but also Gypsies, Bulgarians, Jews and others) were driven from the province. That large-scale ethnic-cleansing campaign occurred on NATO's watch, and the alliance did nothing to halt it, much less reverse the effects. Those refugees are still waiting to go home, even though there is little prospect that

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they will ever be allowed to do so. In addition to the initial campaign of ethnic cleansing, the Kosovar government and its supporters have ignored (if not actually fomented) acts of violence against the remaining non-Albanian inhabitants and presided over the systematic destruction of Christian churches and Serbian historic sites. Again, NATO's response to these depredations has been, at best, anemic.

Any measure granting Kosovo independence will undoubtedly contain language proclaiming respect for the rights of ethnic minorities and will try to maintain the fiction that Kosovo is a multiethnic state. But such language will be little more than meaningless verbiage to soothe the consciences of Western policymakers. The stark reality is that, if there is no partition of Kosovo that leaves predominantly Serb portions under Belgrade's jurisdiction and protection, it will simply be a matter of time before virtually all non-Albanian residents are driven from the province. If NATO has been unwilling or unable to prevent such ethnic cleansing while occupying Kosovo with thousands of troops, it is certainly going to be incapable of preventing further atrocities once those forces are withdrawn. Language about "conditional" or "supervised" independence is merely face-saving diplomatic rhetoric. Within a few years, Kosovo's independence will be unconditional and unsupervised. And given Pristina's track record, there is little reason to expect that non-Albanian inhabitants will be treated with even a modicum of decency once NATO leaves.

There is scant evidence that advocates of a "Greater Albania" have relinquished their territorial claims in the Balkans. Indeed, within months of the NATO-orchestrated Kosovar victory in 1999, Albanian populations in neighboring FYROM waged a low-grade insurgency. Under intense Western pressure, the government in Skopje made a variety of concessions to grant predominantly Albanian areas greater autonomy. That settlement is unlikely to hold. Moreover, there has also been agitation in largely Albanian regions elsewhere in Serbia as well as in Montenegro. Greater Albania advocates in both Kosovo and Albania even cast covetous glances toward Epirus, a region in northwestern Greece. Western policymakers who believe that settling Kosovo's final political status will lead to an end of irredentist Albanian claims elsewhere in the Balkans are likely to be disappointed. It will more likely lead to the next stage of turbulence.

Aside from the political ramifications, an independent Kosovo is likely to intensify some already worrisome trends. Even under international occupation, Kosovo has become a nexus of organized crime in Europe. Indeed, Kosovo (along with neighboring Albania) has emerged as the principal center for both drug trafficking and prostitution. There is also the matter of penetration by radical Islamic elements. Revelations that several members of the terrorist cell that planned attacks against Fort Dix were immigrants from Kosovo may be a harbinger of a much more pervasive danger. Again, if these problems have already reached severe levels despite a measure of international supervision, one can only speculate how bad they might become once international supervision disappears.

Although U.S. and E.U. policy toward Kosovo is the main factor threatening to bring the Balkan interlude to an end, it is not the only one. Western tinkering with the Dayton Accords also threatens to destabilize a very delicate arrangement.

Under the Dayton system, Bosnia has hardly been a smashing success. Her people still lack the basic political cohesion to form an effective state, let alone a meaningful sense of nationhood. If secession were allowed, the overwhelming majority of Bosnian Serbs would vote to detach their self-governing region (the Republika Srpska) from Bosnia and form an independent country or merge with Serbia. Most Croats would also choose to secede and join with Croatia. Bosnian Muslims constitute the only faction that wishes to maintain Bosnia-Herzegovina in its current incarnation.

Political paralysis has plagued Bosnia in the years since the Dayton Accords were signed. To the extent that political power has been exercised by the country's inhabitants at all, it has been at the subnational level—*i.e.*, the Republika Srpska and the Muslim-Croat federation. The national government has been weak to the point of impotence. Most real political power has been exercised by the U.N. high representative, an international potentate who has ruled like a colonial governor. High representatives have routinely removed elected officials from office, disqualified candidates for elections, and imposed various policies by decree.

The economic situation has not been much better. Indeed, without the largesse of international aid agencies and the spending by the swarms of international bureaucrats in the country (which account for more than a third of the country's gross domestic product), Bosnia would scarcely have a functioning economy at all. Nor has the degree of economic freedom and the rule of law developed significantly. The latest global survey of economic freedom by the Heritage Foundation and the *Wall Street Journal* ranked Bosnia 115th out of 157 countries in the survey—right between those enlightened liberal economic models Benin and Ethiopia.

Yet despite the political and economic failures, the Dayton Accords did end the Bosnian civil war, and the country has maintained a peaceful course for nearly 12 years. That achievement has occurred because Dayton established a fragile equilibrium. The Bosnian Serbs have enjoyed enough of a degree of self-government (though under the iron fist of the high representative) that it has not seemed worthwhile to resume the fighting. Bosnian Muslims were satisfied with the fiction of a united state and a disproportionate share of the economic spoils from the international occupation to refrain from trying to extend their authority over the Republika Srpska.

But Western officials can't leave well-enough alone. The reality that Bosnia was (and is) more a pretend polity than a real, viable country has always grated on them. In recent years, they have campaigned to invest Bosnia's weak central government with greater powers—to make it a true, effective national government—a very dangerous venture that threatens to upset the delicate political equilibrium. In particular, the Serbs are increasingly nervous that they may lose much of the self-government that they have enjoyed, and that they might again have to face the prospect of domination by their Muslim adversaries. It was fear of Muslim subjugation that led the Serb minority to make their initial bid for secession in the early 1990's. Even

News & Views *by Srdja Trifkovic*

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if the worst-case scenario (a renewal of the Bosnian civil war) does not emerge, efforts to strengthen the central government are likely to boost Muslim assertiveness and reignite Serb fears. At the very least, that portends an increase in tensions in Bosnia and further strains the insecure democracies in Serbia and Croatia, as they anticipate pressure to defend the interests of their ethnic compatriots across the border.

A final Western policy that threatens to end the Balkan interlude is the growing reluctance to expand the European Union. A prominent carrot that E.U. leaders held out to the feuding factions in the former Yugoslavia was membership in the broader European community—if they would choose the path of peace. According to that logic, national borders—and nationalism itself—would become progressively less important in the "new Europe." Ethnic, religious, and nationalist disputes would fade as the benefits of participation in a united Europe became apparent. Violent internecine episodes would become shameful historical relics.

That argument, however, was based on the twin assumptions (and the implicit promise) that E.U. expansion would be broad and relatively rapid. Those assumptions are increasingly dubious. There is growing opposition among the existing E.U. members to further enlargement in the near term. Indeed, some European leaders have argued that the latest round of expansion should be the last one for the foreseeable future. Although opposition is strongest to Turkey's application for membership, the reluctance is broader than that. There are concerns that some of the most recent inductees from Central and Eastern Europe were not ready, economically or politically, for membership, and that the next round of prospective candidates (especially in the former Yugoslavia) are even less qualified.

In addition, the members of the European Union have encountered great difficulties in agreeing to a new constitution for the bloc. Until that matter is resolved—and the agreement reached in late June looks extremely fragile, since it is already coming under sharp criticism from Italy and other countries—expansion is almost a moot point.

Difficulties with regard to E.U. expansion are not merely an abstract concern. If it becomes clear to the various factions in the former Yugoslavia that membership in the European Union is not forthcoming anytime soon, that will significantly reduce a crucial incentive to mute their disputes. Quarrels over territory and political power could again surge to the surface.

All of these factors combine to make the end of the Balkan interlude more than a remote possibility. The key question for policymakers in Washington is whether they will allow the United States to be drawn into any new round of turmoil, or whether they will take the position that such matters are purely Europe's responsibility. In the 1990's, the United States seized the initiative from the E.U. members and led the Western response to the conflicts in the Balkans. On that occasion, the United States did not have major security problems of her own. America does not have that luxury this time. In all likelihood, Washington will offload responsibility for Balkan issues to its European allies. One can only hope that they will respond with better policies than the United States has foisted on the region.

Ted Galen Carpenter, vice president for defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, is the author of seven books and the editor of ten books on international affairs, including NATO's Empty Victory: A Postmortem on the Balkan War.

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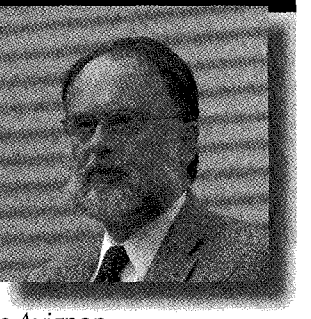

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Materialist Dogmatism

by Mark Shea

We all know that religious believers are fools who will tell themselves anything to prop up their preconceived notions, while atheists are hard-headed rationalists who look the evidence in the face and follow the Truth no matter the cost. Still, one's faith in this common narrative of the chattering classes is shaken from time to time. Consider the case of Matthew Parris, a columnist for the London *Times* who demonstrates the fact that some allegedly rational people are every bit as bull-headedly resistant to the blandishments of empirical evidence as the most hermetically closed-minded geocentrist or six-day creationist.

Parris, a self-described unbeliever, is much exercised over the healing of Sister Marie Simon-Pierre of Parkinson's disease, which is currently under investigation by the Catholic Church. According to CNN, the 46-year-old nun "was diagnosed with Parkinson's in 2001. Her symptoms worsened with time: Driving became practically impossible, she had difficulty walking, and her left arm hung limply at her side." Then she prayed for the intercession of Pope John Paul II:

> Her cure came on the night of June 2, 2005, exactly two months after the pontiff's death, she said. In her room after evening prayers, she said an inner voice urged her to take up her pen and write. She did, and was surprised to see that her handwriting—which had grown illegible because of her illness—was clear. She said she then went to bed, and woke early the next morning feeling "completely transformed."
>
> She had written John Paul's name.

Parris's response to all of this is a textbook example of a dogmatist who dislikes being confused by facts and evidence. He begins by linking the story with an absolute and complete irrelevancy, with the declaration that

> one determinant of US foreign policy towards Israel is the belief, widely held on the Religious Right, that before the prophecy of the Second Coming and the end of the world can be fulfilled, the Israelites must be given their Biblical lands of Judaea and Samaria.

What on God's green earth that has to do with the claim of a miracle by the good nun is never explained. We are simply to understand that any claim of the miraculous automatically puts the one who believes it in the class of a fundamentalist with some crazy dispensationalist notion about the Rapture (which, for fundamentalists, is distinct from the Second Coming).

After this sample of lucidity, Parris then calls for "intelligent Christians" to voice their "righteous anger" and "contempt" for this "nonsense" (apparently meaning "any belief in the supernatural"). Cool, impartial consideration of the evidence, that. He speaks mysteriously of the "excesses of Lourdes" and of "the woeful confusion of faith with superstition." He suggests that "this stuff is the petrol on which the motor of a great Church runs; that without these delusions to feed on, the unthinking masses would falter." He frets that, even worse, it may be that the bishops of the Church are stupid enough to "honestly entertain the possibility that from beyond the grave the late Pope John Paul II interceded with God to cause a woman to be cured of Parkinson's disease." He concludes this dispassionate consideration of the evidence with the following dogmatic declaration:

> "But how can you be sure?" Oh boy, am I sure. Oh great quivering mountains of pious mumbo-jumbo, am I sure. Oh fathomless oceans of sanctified babble, am I sure. Words cannot express my confidence in the answer to the question whether God cured a nun because she wrote a Pope's name down. He didn't.

And to shut down all criticism of this farrago of *non sequiturs*, evidence-free claims, baseless dogmatism and insults, he preemptively denies that he is doing what he is, in fact, doing: "Churlish non-believers like me are made to feel it is we who are being arrogant, dogmatic, closed-minded."

Precisely. You are arrogant, dogmatic, and close-minded, Mr. Parris. You have a theory of materialism, and you are radically uninterested in considering anything inconvenient to that theory. So you dogmatically declare that it could not happen without, like, seeing if the nun was in fact inexplicably cured of Parkinson's disease after prayer to John Paul II.

Parris demonstrates clearly that, despite the common cultural narrative mentioned above, the atheist, when faced with stories like that of the good nun, really only has two choices: He can maintain his ignorant bigotry by simply refusing even to look at her story, or he can entertain the possibility that his All-Explaining Theory of Everything might have some holes in it.

Parris takes the former route, fulfilling to an exacting degree the words of the Prophet Chesterton:

> The believers in miracles accept them (rightly or wrongly) because they have evidence for them. The disbelievers in miracles deny them (rightly or wrongly) because they have a doctrine against them. . . . It is we Christians who accept all actual evidence—it is you rationalists who refuse actual evidence being constrained to do so by your creed.

The great disadvantage under which the atheist materialist invariably places himself is that, in despising the supernatural, he refuses to look and see if it does, in fact, occur. Instead, he fools himself with self-deluding sleight-of-hand. He points to the false miracle and pretends that it stands for all miracles. Or he adopts a mocking tone of voice and pretends that it substitutes for a rational argument. Or he links an honest nun with a crazy fundamentalist political theory. Or, in this case, he simply clamps his eyes shut, plugs his ears and screams "Noooooo!" at the top of his voice while declaring that he is the cool rationalist who follows the evidence wherever it leads.

Meanwhile, the nun who no longer has Parkinson's continues to exist and praise God for her healing, in defiance of the loudest shouts of some ignorant dogmatic scribbler that "He didn't!"

Mark Shea blogs at Catholic and Enjoying It!

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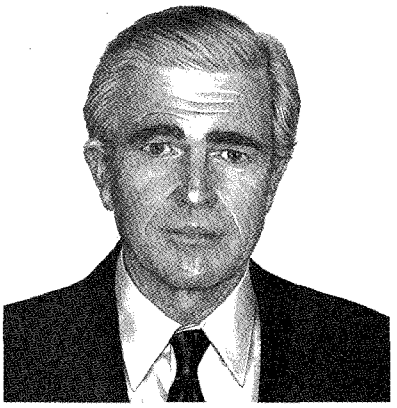
by George McCartney

In Contention



3:10 to Yuma

Produced by Tree Line Films
Directed by James Mangold
Screenplay by Michael Brandt and Halsted Welles
Distributed by Lionsgate

The Nanny Diaries

Produced and distributed by The Weinstein Company
Directed and written by Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini

3:10 to Yuma began as a 15-page Elmore Leonard short story, as bare and uninflected as an early Hemingway narrative. Unlike Hemingway, however, Leonard wasn't crafting a literary iceberg. There's no seven-eighths of meaning beneath his visible one-eighth of narration. What you saw is what you got. Not that this is a flaw. There is something to be said for a narrative that simply means what it says, no more, no less.

On the page, the story efficiently pits two characters against each other: an outlaw in his early 20's and a marshal a few years older. The kid has no responsibilities other than to the gang he rides with; the marshal has a wife and three children, and a code of honor. The two men come together when the marshal is given the assignment to transport the outlaw to the town of Contention, Arizona. His mission is to put the criminal convicted of robbery and murder on the train that will take him to his just deserts in the Yuma Territorial Prison. After reaching the wonderfully named Contention, they must spend a couple of hours in a hotel room waiting on the train. During that time, the marshal protects the outlaw from the brother of a man he may have killed. Impressed by the marshal's willingness to risk his life defending him, the younger man seems to return the favor by passing up a chance to get the drop on his captor. Or is he merely playing it safe? The narrator doesn't say, so we are allowed to believe that the outlaw would have thought it dishonorable to shoot the man who just saved his life.

In 1957, the heyday of Hollywood's psychological western, Leonard's story had to be a screenwriter's dream. It offered ample opportunity to explore the inner selves of two characters in moral contention with each other. It didn't matter that Leonard had abjured such psychological probing on the grounds that it would give way to easy sentimentality. Sentimentality is just what many a screenwriter hankers for. To be fair, director Delmer Daves and writer Halsted Welles didn't slather it on too thickly in 1957. They did make changes, though. In place of the duty-bound marshal, we get Dan Evans, a debt-ridden rancher desperate for money played by Van Heflin, who had done similar duty in *Shane* three years earlier. The outlaw becomes Ben Wade (played by 40-year-old Glen Ford), who is the gang's leader rather than a recent recruit and a man with enough rueful self-awareness to empathize with others. For most of the film's 90 minutes, Heflin and Ford engage in verbal sparring over questions of obligation and honor. The story becomes a Jekyll-and-Hyde variant. Evans is the glum Jekyll, determined to fulfill his duty, regardless of how foolhardy. Wade is the heedless Hyde, a law unto himself who mocks the social order on principle. The film's interest derives from the dawning respect each man—to his surprise—develops for the other.

In remaking this low-budget film, director James Mangold has been overly ambitious. He has opened it up, giving it more characters, more locales, and more action. And he has shot it in wide-screen color. This last decision is most unfortunate. If ever a film called for black-and-white images projected within the narrow confines of a traditional 4:3 screen, this is it. By widening his film's scope, Mangold has sacrificed the original's cramped intensity.

It seems odd to say, but I could have wished for a more formulaic approach to the material. Or, perhaps, a more thoroughly literary crafting that would have given the dialogue a more ambiguous cast. But Mangold and his writer, Michael Brandt, like the original film's Halsted Welles, have not resisted overplaying the Jekyll-and-Hyde hand.

The film opens with a shot of Evans' two sons in their bedroom. The older is reading a dime novel about the exploits of a gallant outlaw. The next day, Evans (Christian Bale) and the boys come upon a real outlaw in the person of Ben Wade (Russell Crowe). He and his gang have been holding up a stagecoach, and the ground is now littered with the bodies of several guards and two of his own men. When the outlaws spot the rancher and his boys, Wade talks to them with seeming kindness, promising not to steal any of their cattle. He insists on taking their horses, however, so they can't follow him, assuring Evans that he will get them back. The father doesn't object. Good to his word, Wade sets their horses loose a few miles later on his journey into Contention.

The older son's reactions indicate he finds Wade's daring and self-confidence more inspiring than his father's prudence and self-doubt. Evans is a loser; Wade, a winner. Among the things Evans has lost is a foot. It was shot off accidentally by one of his own soldiers while he served the Union in the Civil War. How, he wonders, can I tell my son that? Evans has become an embarrassed, fearful man. The only thing he knows to do is hold on to the little that he has. When the railroad company tries to buy out his ranch, he refuses. Yet he doesn't fight back when they send thugs to set fire to his barn by way of encouragement. As a result, his 14-year-old son has become contemptuous of him.

Later, when Evans learns that the same railroad agents will pay him $200 to help escort the now captured Wade to Yuma, he foolishly agrees. He attempts to placate his wife's misgivings with a fatalistic rationalization. "I've been standing on one leg for three years waiting for God to do me a favor." His impatience with Providence turns out to be imprudent.

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He finds himself in the escort party alternately under assault by angry Apaches and Wade's gang. Then, to add to his chagrin, his son shows up along the way. Needless to say, the boy is just in time to prevent Wade from killing his father. When Evans asks him if he can keep Wade covered, the boy answers, "Better'n you." It was just here that I lost any lingering hope for this beautifully made movie. Despite its lovely landscapes and superior acting, it's a crock.

In a scene neither in Leonard's story nor the 1957 film, Wade kills the railroad goon who had torched Evans' barn. When Wade is pulled off the body, he turns to Evans and says, "Well, you wanted him dead, too." Evans replies, "Wishing him dead is one thing, killing him is another." This is, of course, the Jekyll-and-Hyde conceit. Evans nurses grievances; Wade acts on them. One thinks; the other pounces. OK, but what then? Having been jammed into the film, the allusion is barely developed. There's a pass at having the characters come to terms, but it's forced and unconvincing.

The principle performances give the film whatever interest it has. In the more charismatic role, Crowe uses his now patented ironic persona. He is a man who has seen most of the world's stupidities, yet his eyes can still twinkle at the sight of whatever new fooleries come along. He even quotes Scripture to sardonic advantage, having, as he explains, read the Bible cover to cover in three days when his mother left him alone at eight years of age, never to return. Cover to cover. Really? His refined interest in the feminine form suggests he may not have gotten beyond the Song of Songs. At one point he makes a very competent pencil rendering of the naked barmaid with whom he's just slept.

Wade is also a wit. After gunning down most of the stagecoach guards, he remarks to their wounded leader, "I gotta say it's probably cheaper just to let me rob the damn thing." He's so charming that even Evans' wife is taken with him. When he is brought to the Evans' ranch under guard, she nearly swoons at his compliments on her cooking and beauty. Evans must pointedly remind her that she's talking to a killer. Crowe almost pulls this off with his quiet, gravelly voice and engaging, insinuating smile. Almost, but not quite. I found it difficult to believe a mother of two young sons living on a failing ranch in nowhere Arizona wouldn't have laughed in his face. Nor does Wade's growing regard for Evans later in the film seem at all likely, given his heightened sense of self-preservation.

As Evans, Bale has a role that asks for an unselfish performance, and that's just what he gives. Hidden between his ever-slouched hat and his downturning mustache, we can barely see his cavernous eyes. He's a furtive, wounded man who always expects, and frequently gets, the worst. Yet, despite his lumbering gait and choking, hesitant voice, despite his thoroughly downtrodden nature, he finally rises—as we've been conditioned to expect by less pretentious oat-burners—to the occasion. But the occasion is so awfully corny that it is difficult to suppress a sigh of recognition.

The Nanny Diaries also deals with contention—class contention. Based on the novel by Emma McLaughlin and Nicola Kraus, both former nannies, the film satirizes the marital and childrearing practices of the wealthy. Annie Braddock (Scarlett Johannson), a recent graduate in anthropology, finds herself scooped up by a certain Mrs. X (the incomparable Laura Linney playing a woman who remains nameless, the better to fend off litigation) in Central Park one afternoon after saving her son from being run down by a cyclist. Upon introduction, Mrs. X mistakes Annie's name for *nanny* and instantly offers her a position in her floor-through Park Avenue apartment. The mistake is not surprising. Mrs. X is one of those proper ladies who instinctively assume the outside world conforms to her every thought, and her most immediate thought is her need to replace the nanny who has just left her employ.

Annie accepts and quickly finds herself in a habitat as exotic as any Amazonian village. The film makes clever use of Annie's anthropological interests, punctuating its narrative with imagined dioramas in the well-known Childrearing Around the World Wing of the American Museum of Natural History. The exhibits include not only loin-clothed natives sitting outside their mud huts but also Manhattan socialites walking Fifth Avenue or lounging at home in their 95th-floor duplexes watching their 70-inch plasma televisions or having young ladies like Annie drag their foot-stamping, name-calling brats to astronomically expensive private schools, the kind for which four- and five-year-olds must be tutored if they are to have any hope of gaining entry.

Mrs. X proves a monstrous harridan who unhesitatingly takes out her marital problems on the baffled Annie. Mr. X, played to porcine perfection by Paul Giamatti, is her swinish Wall Street husband, who casually cheats on her and exercises his childrearing duties by giving his boy his business card to hold during his frequent absences. The boy, whose name is all-too-probably Greyer, clings to this talisman as if it were his security blanket.

Nanny wimps out and goes soft in the end, but, until then, it is a trenchant, hilarious satire on how wealth and power can deform people. I don't doubt its accuracy for a moment. I know a young lady who recently escaped from the clutches of one of Manhattan's wealthiest families. After nannying their two children for a lavishly paid year, she decided no amount of money was enough to endure the parents' ogreish pathology. ◁

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by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

At Home Abroad

The Eternal City is home to many eternal things—or, rather, their representatives, among them St. Peter's, the Castel Sant'Angelo, the Capitoline Hill, and the Forum. Nevertheless, on recent travels to Rome, my wife's and my first visit has been to none of these things, but, instead, to our good friends Asha and Bellamy, who reside on the north side of the Villa Borghese gardens two streets over from Il Ristorante The Meeting—an establishment which, though heavily patronized by Americans and Britons on account of its proximity to the U.S. Embassy on Via Veneto, offers a superb Italian menu and wine list. Our friends are hardly Roman notables or intellectuals, and this estimable restaurant in an upper-middle-class residential neighborhood is not listed in any guidebook I know of. Rather, they belong to the quotidian society of the great city they inhabit, away from the worn track beaten by the paparazzi and the guidebooks, in which the foreign and the familiar merge invitingly. In such company, we experience Rome as living Romans experience it—as a vital modern metropolis, not a dead historical one. The Eternal City can wait 24 hours. Our first day in Rome, we are more than content with the contemporary one.

My fundamental inability to regard a foreign capital as either a gigantic museum or a superuniversity is related no doubt to my having grown up in a great American city, New York. Residing in Manhattan, my family, and our friends and acquaintances, were scarcely in awe of the place in its aspect as a cornucopia of learning and culture. My sister, brother, and I received our educations from the Spence, Buckley, and Trinity Schools, not from the School of New York, the metropolis itself. While retaining the impression of having grown up at the Metropolitan Opera to which my parents had subscription tickets, I have probably visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art no more than a dozen times in my life, and the Museum of Modern Art perhaps once (and that once was more than enough). I was up in the Statue of Liberty on one occasion; the Empire State Building, once also. Fortunately, New York is not rich in historic buildings, or, indeed, in any architecture worthy of the name, so there were no great cultural opportunities missed in that respect. Most Saturdays when we remained in town over the weekend, my father and I taxied to the North River Piers and went through one of the berthed North Atlantic liners for several hours before sailing time. Afterward, we watched from pier's end as she was nudged into the river and headed downstream by tugs. (Thanks to my father's passion for ships and the sea, I have been aboard all the great liners of the middle part of the 20th century, including the old *Europa*—a German ship confiscated by the French after the war and rechristened *Liberté*—the first *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth, Mauretania, America, Andrea Doria, Cristoforo Colombo, Ile de France, United States*, and *France*. And most of them *were* architecture, incidentally.)

My experience of London was quite different, the year I spent in England with my family when in my middle teens. My father, an Anglophile who was doing research at the British Museum at the time and for many years taught a two-semester graduate-level course on the history of the British Empire at Columbia, ruthlessly dragged my sister and me (and my mother and infant brother) around the city and its environs each weekend on what he, mischievously, called "culture tours." We greatly resented these "CTs" (or thought we did, or maybe just pretended to) but we saw a prodigious number of marvelous things in a year and learned a great deal as well—mostly from my father but also, of course, from the various professional tour guides who took us about the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey, Hampton Court Palace, Chiswick House, the Tate Gallery, and the rest.

Unfortunately, Trinity did not offer a course in British history until the following year, so that much of what my father taught fell into no comprehensive context and was, therefore, to some extent wasted; had we visited England two years later, all of what I saw and learned would have had far more meaning for me. As it was, my memories of London (and of Cornwall, where we rented an 11th-century farmhouse near the hamlet of Marhamchurch for two weeks in April and, later, the month of August) remain, more than four decades afterward, intense and indelible. And yet the basis of memory is less—far less—of the monuments, the cathedrals, the paintings, the formal 18th-century gardens than of the homely reality of English town and country life. My sister and I went every day to school in London (she, to St. Paul's Girls' School in Hammersmith; I, to a tutorial establishment based in Knightsbridge, since Trinity perversely refused credit for a year at the Haberdasher School where I had been admitted), and otherwise made ourselves as free of the place as we had of New York. London, to us, was not a monument to the past but a living city—the more so since my grandfather Philpotts, a native-born Londoner, was still around in those days. I think I should have been thrilled far more to see Evelyn Waugh (who died only four years later) emerge unsteadily from White's than by a view of the Tower room in which St. Thomas More was imprisoned.

Still, background aside, it seems to me that my approach to foreign travel would be fundamentally different were I less of a novelist and narrative writer and more of a scholar and critic. My immediate interest, as I have said, in traveling abroad is to observe how foreign peoples live today and to share their experience insofar as I am capable of doing (which, of course, is ridiculously little). The history—political, social, religious, and cultural—behind that experience is not so much secondary in value as it is in the temporal sense: I am too impatient to hold back from seizing immediately on what is directly apprehensible, while understanding that the past usually means more to me when fixed in the context of the known and felt present; and so I prefer

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to investigate the present first, and move on to the past after that.

My chief preparation before going abroad is always to learn as much of the language of the place I am traveling to as I can, language being for me, a man of words, at once my natural milieu and my sole defense. Not having language as a traveler for me is at once an inordinate inconvenience, a humiliation, and a scandal. In France and Italy, whose languages I have studied, I would rather keep my mouth shut than attempt, *in extremis*, to communicate in English—since, speaking English, I might as well never have left home. Once on foreign soil, my immediate, overwhelming, and lasting impulse is to set out on foot and almost in random direction, carrying with me a guidebook, it is true, but mainly as an orienteering reference and for its maps. Museums are wonderful places—and so are the streets, the mean and commonplace just as much as the elegant and historic. To walk all day across Rome, poking into this and that, stopping in at a wine bar to sit with *La Reppublica* over espresso and a *cornetto* or a glass of wine, consuming a three-course Roman lunch lasting two hours and chatting afterward with the waiter, dropping into a neighborhood church to hear part of a Mass being said, taking a walk in the park or the Bioparco and warming up afterward with a martini at Harry's Bar at the top of the Veneto across from the Porta Piciana before going on to a performance at the Rome Opera—finally, at the end of the day, to catch a cab or ride a crowded bus back to the hotel through medieval byways, past the lighted windows of elegant shops where, earlier in the day, one bought an elegant silk necktie, a pair of fine leather gloves, or a well-printed and strongly bound *messale*—these things, for me, come even before investigation of the magnificent buildings, museums, and galleries. Living in Rome for a week or two, I live much as I lived in New York for 30 years, although on an unimaginably grander scale.

In New York, too, I was a walker, mainly on the weekends and especially in late fall (mid-October to the beginning of December) which is always the best time of year in the city. Often on a Saturday, I would walk from my apartment on East 93rd Street down Madison Avenue as far as Greenwich Village and back again up Fifth Avenue, looking into shop windows and ducking inside secondhand bookstores and tobacconist shops, eating lunch in some cheap but excellent neighborhood restaurant, admiring the beautiful, well-dressed women who were still to be seen around town in the 70's. The canyoned streets of New York are justly famous, yet nothing can make up, in my mind, for the city's lack of a natural eminence from which the entirety of the metropolis can be taken in at a glance. New York has the Empire State Building as Paris has the Eiffel Tower and London, the Tower and the column on Fish Street commemorating the Great Fire. But these are artificial vantages, with no mediating ground between the foot and the spire. Paris has also, of course, the hill of Montmartre, affording a splendid view of the city below to which the eye descends by degrees. But not even Montmartre compares with Rome's Gianicolo, the long, partly wooded ridge extending south of Vatican City to Trastevere from which Garibaldi defied the French troops in 1848. The Gianicolo is dominated by the impressive Garibaldi monument and the Villa Farnesina, which I have not visited but expect to look into some day. A crest of umbrellaed Roman pines surmounts the ridge, decorated on its eastern slopes by a number of elegant villas, some of them surrounded by vegetable gardens and even a modest vineyard or two. For years, I had wanted to climb the Gianicolo and take in the city from the summit. On a recent trip, when we lodged in a convent at the foot of the hill, I decided to make the ascent without further procrastination.

In fact, I climbed up three times over a period of twelve days, the view on the first morning having been obscured by clouds and rain squalls. In the end, I beheld the Eternal City from the heights at three different times of day and in three wholly different kinds of weather. Most enchanting by far was the third and last time, toward sunset on a short January day, with the sun low at my back behind the great pines and the snowfields glinting on the blue indistinct Apeninne Mountains 70 kilometers (or so I judged the distance) to the east. The spoking, obtuse rays illumined the city in a golden glow and picked out its every salient feature—San Giovanni in Laterno, Santa Maria Maggiore, the Forum, the Spanish Steps, the Pantheon, Piazza Navona, Castel Sant'Angelo (the dome of San Pietro was out of sight around the wooded shoulder of the Gianicolo), and, behind the Villa Medici, the emerald expanse and dark green canopy of the Villa Borghese stretching to the northeast suburbs. (I thought of the lovers at the conclusion of *Gianni Schicchi*, regarding Florence from a balcony: "*Fiorenze è bella . . .*" At that moment, I felt that I possessed Rome.) We had our farewells yet to make to Bellamy and Asha before the impending departure two days later.

The gardens of the Villa Borghese lay shrouded in a misty rain next morning, silent and peaceful as an English estate park, as my wife and I passed through the ivied Porta Piciana from the bus stop at the head of the Veneto. It is a 10- or 15-minute walk along the broad gravel path of the Viale S. Paolo de Brasile to the aviary, and on to the Bioparco. On account of the rain, there was no one ahead of us at the ticket window that stands to the left of the tall, stone-columned iron gates surmounted by a pair of statuary lions. At the gate, we surrendered our tickets to a pleasant young woman to whom we were by now familiar and went round past the elephant exhibit to an enclosed yard surrounded by a wall whose three wide observation windows gave upon the lush Indian rainforest beyond.

Bellamy reclined close by the lowest window with his left paw and chin resting meditatively on a short log. Behind him at a distance, Asha had just emerged from a dense grove of tropical foliage at the back of the extensive yard. On seeing us, the black brush at the end of her tail waved gracefully, and she started forward on her great, silent, well-sprung, deliberate paws, but Bellamy continued to doze with his amber eyes closed, insensible as yet of our presence, his mane beaded with droplets of moisture.

Asha and Bellamy, our great friends, are a gift from the government of India to the Italian government. As only 300 Asian lions remain in the wild on the Island of Gir, and these few are greatly endangered, they are fortunate to have had the good luck to end up in Italy, where they are making great progress with the language. The four of us—Bellamy, Asha, my wife, and I—chatted for a time in broken Italian before falling silent ahead of the arrival of a pair of keepers. The keepers confirmed for us that, indeed, there are as yet no *cuccioli leoncini*, but that the zoo is hoping for a blessed event some time in the next year or so. Perhaps, on our next visit to Rome, we shall find confirmation of the divine primeval truth that one and one indeed make three, or even four or five. ◁▷

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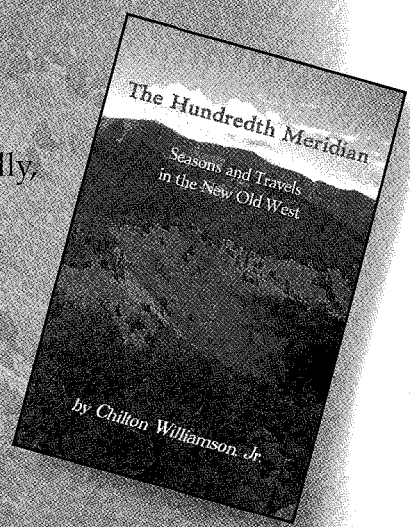
The Hundredth Meridian

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Seasons and Travels in the New Old West



What the Old West had that the New West increasingly lacks are, finally, reality and dignity—the reality of what is basic to human experience, the dignity that comes from acceptance of the physical trials, dangers, hardships, and experience which accompany that reality.

—From the Foreword

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Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings?"

Join Chronicles *editor* ***Thomas Fleming*** *and Rockford Institute executive vice president* ***Christopher Check*** *in*

Venice, Ravenna, and Padua

Gates to the East

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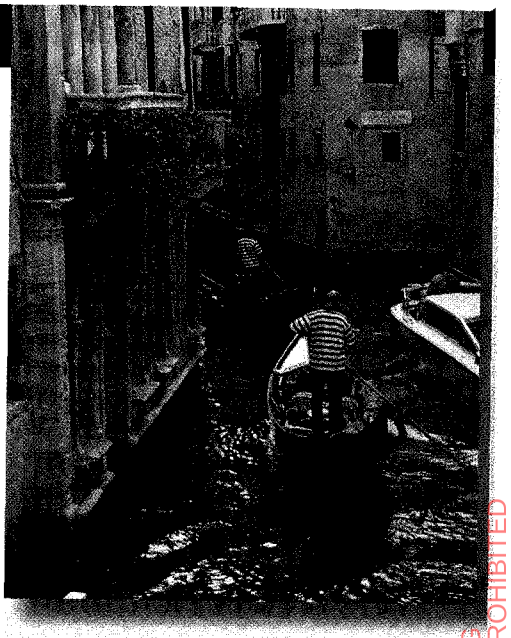

Robert Browning is only one of a long list of great writers—from Shakespeare, Wordsworth, and Byron to Henry James, Thomas Mann, and Ernest Hemingway—who fell in love with Venice. Who wouldn't go to Venice, if he had a chance to go in the company of congenial souls and to learn something about the amazing republic that challenged kingdoms and empires (while making a profit) and stood in the path of the Ottoman Turk? William McNeill called Venice "the hinge of Europe" because it was Venice, and before Venice, Ravenna, that connected Europe with the vital culture of the Byzantine Empire, a culture manifested in the domes and spires of San Marco and Ravenna's exquisite mosaics (Italy's finest).

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